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‘As you receive with one hand, so should you give with the other’: The Mutual-Help Practices of Cape Verdeans on the Lisbon Periphery

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ABSTRACT

Rural Cape Verdeans employ a number of mutual-help practices to mitigate the uncertainties surrounding activities fundamental to their subsistence. One of these practices is *djunta mon* ('to work together'), a loosely planned, non-monetized system of allocating labor at peak intervals during the growing season. By means of *djunta mon*, neighbors or family members work in each other's fields until the tasks of every land-owning participant are complete. Alongside *djunta mon* in rural Cape Verde exist a number of other non-remunerated mutual-help practices, such as *djuda mutua* ('mutual help') and *laja kaza* ('to add concrete to one's house'). While less visible than *djunta mon*, they are nonetheless important in completing tasks essential to rural life in the islands. In this thesis, I will attempt to show how Cape Verdean immigrants in Lisbon have adapted the mutual-help practices of rural Cape Verde to a new, transnational context. The iterations of these practices in Lisbon differ from their rural counterparts in that they involve fewer people, occur on a year-round basis, and are concerned primarily with domestic work. They also help people find employment, access childcare, secure interest-free credit, and construct or repair houses. I will argue that extensive mutual-help ties ensure Cape Verdean migrants in Lisbon a sufficient pool of family and friends upon which they can rely for support and assistance. An additional element I will explore is the perception among Cape Verdean immigrants that these mutual-help practices seem to be occurring with less frequency. While this shift is in part due to the availability of other means of support, I will contend that the changing attitude of Cape Verdeans towards mutual help is also due to their encountering neoliberal notions of 'self-accountability.' Thus, Cape Verdeans perceive that their mutual-help practices are in decline, while simultaneously needing the material support that they provide.

Keywords – Cape Verde, Lisbon, Social Economy, Mutual-Help Practices, Circulation Networks

RESUMO

Os cabo-verdianos em meio rural servem-se de uma série de práticas de ajuda mútua, nas actividades fundamentais à sua subsistência, para mitigarem as incertezas que lhes estão associadas. Uma dessas práticas é o *djunta mon* («trabalhar juntos»), um sistema flexível que garante mão-de-obra não remunerada durante os períodos de alta da estação agrícola. Por meio do *djunta mon*, vizinhos ou familiares trabalham nos campos uns dos outros até as tarefas de cada proprietário estarem completas. Para além do *djunta mon* existe em Cabo Verde uma série de outras práticas de ajuda mútua, tais como *djuda* e *laja kaza* («lajear casa»). Embora menos visível do que o *djunta mon*, elas são fundamentais para realizar tarefas essenciais à vida rural das ilhas. Nesta tese, vou tentar mostrar como os imigrantes cabo-verdianos adoptaram as práticas de ajuda mútua de Cabo Verde num novo contexto. As interacções destas práticas em Lisboa diferem das suas homólogas rurais, já que elas envolvem menos pessoas, ocorrem durante o ano inteiro e prendem-se principalmente com tarefas domésticas. Vou argumentar que os extensos laços de ajuda mútua garantem aos imigrantes cabo-verdianos um conjunto de familiares e amigos com que podem contar para apoio e assistência. Um elemento adicional que explorarei é a percepção entre os imigrantes cabo-verdianos que essas práticas de ajuda mútua parecem estar a ocorrer com menos frequência. Enquanto esta mudança é em parte devida à disponibilidade de outros tipos de apoio, vou afirmar que esta atitude entre cabo-verdianos é também devida à presença de noções neoliberais de «auto-responsabilidade». Assim, os cabo-verdianos entendem que as suas práticas de ajuda mútua estão em declínio, ao mesmo tempo que precisam do apoio material que elas fornecem.

Palavras-chave - Cabo Verde, Lisboa, economia social, práticas de ajuda mútua, redes de circulação

RESUMO CIENTÍFICO

Qualquer descrição das práticas de ajuda mútua da população imigrante cabo-verdiana da Área Metropolitana de Lisboa, conhecidas como *djuda mutua* ou simplesmente *djuda*, deve incluir uma discussão sobre práticas semelhantes em Cabo Verde. Afinal, estes são os fenómenos que «viajam» com uma população quando começa uma vida «nova» no país de destino. A mais evidente dessas práticas de ajuda mútua encontradas em Cabo Verde é o *djunta mon* (literalmente, «a união das mãos», mas significa «trabalhar juntos» ou «um esforço conjunto»). Conceptualmente, o *djunta mon* e a *djuda* são diferentes, embora na prática elas possam coincidir ou misturar-se.

Característica definidora da vida quotidiana de Santiago rural, a ilha de onde provém a maioria da população cabo-verdiana de Lisboa, o *djunta mon* serve como um mecanismo flexível para distribuir a mão-de-obra durante os períodos altos da estação agrícola. Embora os grupos precisem de ser organizados antes das primeiras chuvas, há uma continuidade considerável na sua composição de ano para ano. A prática permite flexibilidade e autonomia na alocação de trabalhadores de acordo com as necessidades do agricultor, reduz a quantidade de tempo gasto em tarefas fundamentais, bem como a incerteza acerca de actividades essenciais à subsistência rural e reforça relações entre amigos e familiares cooperantes.

O *djunta mon* não é apenas uma prática rural. Na sua tese de 1992, Solomon descreve a importância do *djunta mon* como uma questão de sobrevivência entre as mulheres de Tira Chapéu, um bairro periférico da capital, Praia. Na sua descrição, cabo-verdianos negociando uma existência marginal e, em grande parte, urbana têm transformado o *djunta mon* para enfrentarem novos desafios. Este *djunta mon* «urbano» difere da sua contraparte rural em termos de organização, tempo gasto e escolha de tarefas. Trata-se de menos pessoas, principalmente mulheres; opera durante o ano inteiro e centra-se principalmente em trabalho doméstico.

A plasticidade inerente a estes conceitos conduz o meu projecto de pesquisa: uma investigação sobre como os cabo-verdianos de Lisboa adaptam e reproduzem práticas de ajuda mútua. Como tal, o *djunta mon* de Cabo Verde rural deve ser visto como ponto de partida conceptual. O meu objectivo para esta tese é, portanto, destacar quatro das

maneiras que os imigrantes cabo-verdianos têm reinterpretado criativamente as suas práticas de ajuda mútua para enfrentarem os desafios da vida na periferia de Lisboa.

Primeiro, em Lisboa, tal como em Cabo Verde, os cabo-verdianos contam com a ajuda mútua do *laja kaza* («lajear casa») para construírem ou repararem as casas. Os que desejam construir uma casa no futuro têm vontade de ajudar nos projectos de construção em curso de parentes e vizinhos para garantirem laços que eles podem utilizar quando construírem as suas próprias casas. Na sua proposta de pesquisa de doutoramento de 2008, Ascensão denomina este evento de «convocação de aliados», durante o qual o dono reúne a mão-de-obra e o conhecimento dos parentes, alimentação e álcool, equipamentos «emprestados» dum local de obras a partir da tarde de sábado até a domingo à noite e materiais para erigir uma casa. A respeito das origens de bairros como a Cova da Moura e Seis de Maio, um informante meu mencionou que o *djunta mon* e o *laja kaza* permitiram a rápida construção dessas áreas. É importante notar que a casa é uma entidade prática e simbólica de significado especial entre imigrantes cabo-verdianos. Ser o dono duma casa grande, «bem construída», é um indicador de prestígio e sucesso.

Segundo, a ajuda mútua entre redes de pais cabo-verdianos permite-lhes organizar um sistema de responsabilidade rotativa para cuidar das crianças. Enquanto uma creche paga suplementa, ocasionalmente, estas modalidades, redes de cuidado de crianças necessitam da partilha e negociação entre as mães, os seus cônjuges e filhos mais velhos. A troca temporária de crianças é, entre cabo-verdianos, um símbolo de confiança mútua e implica a flexibilidade horizontal das suas famílias. Alguns dos meus informantes crescerem com pais de criação, geralmente com parentes femininos como mães de criação, um facto indicativo da profundidade desta prática encontrada entre cabo-verdianos rurais. Nessas relações, as crianças geralmente desenvolvem fortes ligações com os pais de criação. Estas não são baseadas em «biologia», «paternidade» nem na transferência de substância corporal, mas são as que formaram devido à presença mútua durante a criação da criança.

Terceiro, na periferia de Lisboa, encontrando trabalho nas limpezas ou na construção civil normalmente requer a activação estratégica e a utilização das redes locais de ajuda mútua. Duas das minhas informantes que trabalham na limpeza descreveram uma espécie de «emprego de rotação», onde trabalharam para uma família portuguesa por

alguns meses e depois foram substituídas por uma parente ou uma amiga próxima que tinha acabado de chegar das ilhas. A este respeito, embora ainda em Cabo Verde, a minha informante encontrou um emprego em Lisboa como uma empregada doméstica através duma tia paterna. Substituindo a tia, que voltou a Cabo Verde para ficar com os filhos, a minha informante passou a trabalhar para esta família portuguesa por quatro anos. Em 2008, ela teve de deixar este trabalho devido a uma gravidez e à chegada da sua filha de onze anos de Cabo Verde, uma vez que a família para a qual trabalhava queria que a sua empregada vivesse na casa, como empregada interna. Reproduzindo este esquema de «trabalho de rotação», a minha informante arranjou uma amiga para a substituir.

Quatro, muitos habitantes de Santiago rural participam em pelo menos uma *totokaxa*, uma associação de crédito rotativa, que reúne parentes e amigos para fins de poupança e empréstimo. Cabo-verdianos rurais usam a *totokaxa* como um recurso económico, fora do mercado, que mistura assistência financeira com tipos mais tradicionais de cooperação. Ao participar ou «jogar» (*djuga*) numa *totokaxa*, os membros concordam em fazer contribuições monetárias regulares para uma caixa que é atribuída uma vez a cada contribuinte durante o curso de uma rotação, permitindo assim que estes cabo-verdianos rurais tenham acesso periódico a quantidades relativamente significativas de dinheiro.

Um subtexto palpável no discurso dos meus informantes é o entendimento de que as suas práticas de ajuda mútua estão a acontecer cada vez menos frequência. Anos de expansão económica na periferia de Lisboa foram sucedidos pela actual crise, que tem exacerbado discrepâncias em termos de riqueza e privilégio. Os meus informantes dizem recorrentemente que já não são capazes de contar com a assistência de outras pessoas para os ajudar no seu dia-a-dia. Pior, dizem eles, amigos e familiares continuam a expressar empatia para os com carenciados, especialmente durante o actual momento de crise, mas hesitam em tomar medidas para ajudarem os menos afortunados entre o grupo. Cada vez mais cabo-verdianos receiam colocar-se numa situação em que podem ser a única pessoa que intervém para fornecer a «dádiva» de ajuda mútua. Por exemplo, uma informante minha disse que tinha dificuldade em encontrar uma madrinha para a sua filha mais nova, uma situação anteriormente considerada rara.

Este sentido colectivo de crise é em parte devido a uma noção particular de tempo que é compartilhada pelos meus informantes. Como mostrado, anos de crise têm enfraquecido a capacidade dos imigrantes cabo-verdianos para oferecerem ajuda mútua, de modo que são incapazes de contrariar a percepção do presente (*gosi*) como um de discórdia e aberração. Na crise actual, o «antes» (*antis*) é idealizado como um tempo em que os cabo-verdianos tinham mais «controle» sobre a vida quotidiana por serem capazes de fornecer ajuda mútua. Não poder, agora, alcançar este estado reflecte a polarização entre o «antes» e a crise actual. Como resultado, a «crise» tornou-se um ponto de partida para um futuro que será caracterizado pela instabilidade, a fragmentação e a irreversibilidade.

Mesmo que o actual momento de crise tenha levado os meus informantes a acreditarem que as suas práticas colectivas estão em declínio, a circulação de ajuda mútua continua a ser uma parte integrante da experiência de ser imigrante cabo-verdiano na periferia de Lisboa. O acto ressoa para uma comunidade social de dimensão internacional, baseia-se numa tradição cultural semelhante e transmite uma mensagem de esperança. Assim, a circulação de ajuda mútua estabiliza um mundo cuja «ordem» é evasiva. Apesar de não ser capaz de reverter os desafios estruturais que os cabo-verdianos encontram, a prestação de ajuda mútua continua, ainda que de forma tentada. É nestas situações que eu descubro a famosa resiliência cabo-verdiana ou *forsa*, que encontro na sua companhia com admiração e carinho, embora sempre um pouco preocupado com o futuro.

CONTENTS

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During the process of writing this thesis, I accumulated innumerable debts to a number of individuals who aided my research in concrete and intangible ways. I would particularly like to acknowledge my informants who patiently answered scores of questions I had about their lives and showed me firsthand the renowned Cape Verdean generosity, or *morabeza*. Likewise, this thesis would not have been possible without the generous grant I received in 2009 from the Rotary Foundation. In this regard, Luís Soares Rodrigues and Louise Zerba deserve special mention. On the academic side, I hope that the sizeable number of references I make to the work of my fellow researchers expresses my gratitude to the scholars who study and write about Cape Verde and Cape Verdeans in Portugal. Moreover, I am very grateful for the untold number of discussions I have had about the topics covered in this thesis with colleagues, professors, and friends. Unfortunately, their names are too numerous to list in this brief section. Comments and suggestions from those who listened to or read portions of this thesis have helped me sharpen my argument and clarify my approach. In this light, I would like to underscore my appreciation to Professors João de Pina Cabral and João Vasconcelos for their insightful feedback and to my mother and sister, Christine and Margaret Weeks, for their meticulous and thoughtful revisions of the manuscript. Lastly, I dedicate this thesis to my late father, Albert Weeks, who died of cancer during this past year. Without the support, understanding, and love he showed me throughout my life, I would not have been able to see this project to its completion.

The Mutual-Help Practices of Cape Verdeans on the Lisbon Periphery

I.
INTRODUCTION

One of my objectives in undertaking this project is to recognize the difficulties that Lisbon's Cape Verdean labor immigrants face in balancing their work lives with unremunerated obligations to kin, neighbors, and friends. Moving away from accounts that consider labor migrants first and foremost as wage earners (e.g., migration policies), I hope to explain how they combine paid and unpaid work in their roles as parents, relatives, partners, colleagues, and acquaintances. In this sense, I will not analyze individual economic motivations, but will show how my informants participate in a collective undertaking of socio-economic significance.

My aim for this thesis is to view 'work' as transcending mere 'employment' or 'wage labor' to include all sorts of activities connected to the productive and reproductive social relations of a society (Narotzky, 1997: 36-37). I believe that a study of how Cape Verdean migrants in Portugal reconcile work and family life will shed light on the tensions and vulnerabilities that this population encounters. The majority of Cape Verdeans in Lisbon face intense pressure arising from work (long hours, multiple jobs, and atypical schedules), which amplifies the economic precariousness, racial discrimination, and social and political exclusion that they confront on a daily basis in Portuguese society (Wall, 2008: 221). My goal is to try to understand the ways in which my informants use their personal relationships to help each other confront these difficulties.

In short, this manuscript covers mutual-help practices, one of anthropology's traditional fields of inquiry. My hope is not to separate the sizeable body of literature on this topic with the *actual* enactment of mutual-help practices by my informants. Although I am responsible for the ideas and descriptions presented in this text, I do not want to overstate the definitiveness I give to this project. Furthermore, I make no universal claims about the authority of its message. After all, no ethnography can be entirely conclusive, only provisional and meditative (Pardue, 2008: 163). My objective therefore is to bring into temporary relief the ideas and practices of my informants: Cape Verdean labor immigrants and their families. By building upon existing accounts of the Lisbon

periphery and the literature on mutual-help practices from other contexts, I hope to add my voice to an agenda that synthesizes scholarship with hope for a more just world for people who suffer from discrimination, a group that includes the Cape Verdean labor immigrants of the Lisbon periphery.

In terms of a 'methodology,' my intention was to be able to take into account the worldview that Cape Verdean immigrants in Lisbon employ in their everyday lives. This method entailed attempting to perceive the meanings that they ascribe to their actions, as well as how my informants make sense of external phenomena as they affect them. In general terms, I hoped to be able to see why Cape Verdeans 'answer' in a particular way the 'questions' that they have about their lives (Stack, 1974: xiii). To this end, I designed a methodology that combined engagement with movement, expansive enough to consider the worldviews and practices of Cape Verdean migrants, yet focused enough to understand how such 'realities' come into being in daily life on the Lisbon periphery. Given that fieldwork both comprises and confines one's ethnographic findings, I did not attempt to comprehend the innermost thinking of my informants, but rather recognize how they engage the world from a particular point of view (Ho, 2009: 18-19). Because it is difficult to be a participant observer in a transnational context, it was my intention to reconcile interaction with informants across a number of dispersed sites, including in virtual form (e.g., email), with data collected from formal interviews, newspapers, academic texts, and popular culture.

Following Bourgois (2003: 11), any study of a marginalized group risks encountering "problems with the politics of representation." Thus, I have consciously tried to avoid being an anthropologist-activist giving 'voice' to the 'silenced,' for such projects often inadvertently serve to advance discourses of victimization. In this light, I have attempted to construct an understanding of the ideas and practice of Cape Verdean labor immigrants that shows the interface between the overwhelming structural challenges of the Lisbon periphery and the individual lives and actions of my informants. My intention is to add dimensions of agency and group dynamics to the existing politico-economic accounts of poverty and marginalization in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (Horta, 2008; Gusmão, 2004). Humbly, I follow the lead of Gramsci, ceding ground to the specificity of the Cape Verdean experience in Portugal and piecing together my

informants' narratives, while contextualizing their local realities within larger-scale developments (Crehan, 2002: 126).

In order to 'collect data,' I proceeded to study my friends, people whom I met in contexts other than in the 'field.' By no means authoritative, 'facts' become understood and interpreted when the collector goes to a particular event but cannot make the next, when she eats a certain meal but has to decline another. As such, we can conclude that 'ethnography' will always be an incomplete and hermeneutic endeavor, one that is open-ended and that allows for multiple readings and alternative conclusions (Scheper-Hughes, 1992: 23-30). Though hardly 'scientifically neutral,' I hope that I offer an 'accurate' portrayal of the events as I have understood them, such that my readers will be able to perceive how I collected 'data' while participating in the daily lives of my informants.

My subject matter best lent itself to an ethnographic framework, and anthropology's range of methods enabled me to better examine, interpret, and provide a perspective of how Cape Verdeans have adapted the mutual-help practices of a rural past to an urban context. I believe this approach is suited to document the lives of people on the margins of a society that is largely indifferent to them. Studies of how people negotiate marginality often deal with psychological factors and require researchers to visit diverse sites and employ a methodology that yields in-depth descriptions. It is with this in mind that I chose an approach that allowed me to analyze interrelated factors, while building rapport and trust with participants during the process of inquiry and when cross-checking data. Both structured and informal interviews, some of which were recorded, enabled interviewees to describe their own cultural experiences and perceptions of mutual help. I placed greater emphasis on personal narratives, as opposed to group discussions, with particular attention paid to individuals whom I believed were exemplary or representative of a larger group of people.

In addition to analyzing the discourses about, logics of, and justifications for mutual help, I knew that the 'success' of my ethnography would depend on my descriptions of how Cape Verdean labor immigrants actually go about the practices (Ho, 2009: 31). Therefore, my project required diverse accounts to establish mutual help within a social context. As a result, the object of the research (practice, reinterpretation, and cultural imagination) became the 'framework' that ordered and contextualized my

descriptions and observations, which I made in a range of sites using methods that varied according to the element under consideration.

Of course, this endeavor was 'mutualist,' 'reflexive,' and an example of 'scholarly self-reflection' in the sense that I examined my own position and subjectivity and those of the interviewees, and how our (the participants') history, gender, class, and ethnicity 'shaped' the fieldwork experience. Throughout, it was my intention to de-emphasize the boundary between ethnographic anthropology and other forms of inquiry. I proposed a project that drew from my experiences in and impressions from the field and examined this (as) text alongside economic, spatial, and cultural analyses. With this method, I hope to engender a conversation about mutual help that circumspectly merges (con)textual material from disparate sources with the theoretical and creative scope of the social sciences (cf. Hubbard, 2005: 5).

One of the most significant research challenges was getting people to tell stories and speak candidly about mutual help. Though its practice is an exceedingly common occurrence among Cape Verdeans, I tried (and probably failed at times) *not* to give my informants the idea of mutual help as a way of labeling and classifying disparate phenomena. My fear was that we would universalize the practice on the basis of such a category. In asking about mutual help, was I 'putting forward' a concept that they themselves do not employ? Was I looking for patterns where there was just noise? Were *my* intellectual categories unnecessarily limiting my informants' thinking about their everyday practices?

Though the telling of narratives often comes about in unplanned settings and random conversations, there are particular situations in Cape Verdean culture during which storytelling plays an essential role. One such place is at the table during a meal, in particular lunch on Saturdays and Sundays. In my observation, mealtimes around the table, and also the period after meals, became important places for family gathering and discussion, a likely scenario for unprompted storytelling. Cape Verdean gastronomy helped to 'stage' this setting: everyone was served from a single pot at the same time. If a family member was running late, her plate was served, covered, and left in her regular place at the table. In my experience with Cape Verdeans, I found little difficulty in

initiating conversation with my hosts on a variety of topics in such situations, a task more easily done with a bottle of Manecon, Fogo Island's (in)famous red wine.

My introduction to the 'field' in Lisbon began from four different starting points: three groups of unrelated people and one institutional affiliation. I came to Lisbon with a number of informal contacts from my two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Cape Verde (2006-2008). During my three-month training in 2006, I stayed with a family in a town outside the capital Praia, on the Island of Santiago. Many members of this family were already living in Lisbon at that time, while others have immigrated subsequently. My close friend and 'university-student informant,' whom I first met in 2006, introduced me to his family members (mother, father, stepmother, stepfather, aunts, and cousins), all of whom live on the Lisbon periphery. I am usually 'off duty' as an anthropologist when with this friend. These are times when we share a meal, enjoy each other's company, and catch up with 'news' (*notisia*) about people we know from Cape Verde. For the purposes of collecting narratives on mutual help, I briefly employed him as a research assistant while he was home from university during the summer of 2011. Before going to the 'field' with my 'assistant,' I familiarized him with my research objectives. Though not technically a 'labor immigrant,' my friend became an 'informant,' sitting for two lengthy interviews in August of 2011.

The other two groups of informants are, respectively, people I befriended while living on the Island of Fogo (from September 2006 to August 2008) and a friend and colleague from the community association *Moinho da Juventude* in Alto da Cova da Moura, a neighborhood in the Lisbon suburb of Amadora. Starting with these three 'groups,' I subsequently met their friends and family members in a 'snowball effect' similar to the one I experienced when meeting people in Cape Verde.

Fieldwork in Lisbon was most active for me during weekends, for Cape Verdean labor immigrants (like others on the Lisbon periphery) work long hours during the week, either as employees, job seekers, or carrying out daily household tasks. Weekend lunches were usually the best opportunities to get together, for it is a time when most women are at home with their children, friends, and family members. After many weekend afternoons at locations across the Lisbon periphery, I started to learn something about the domestic spaces and the gendered division of labor of Cape Verdean migrant families (cf.

Pardue, 2008: 132). All of these informal and friendly interactions provided ample opportunities to 'collect' ethnographic 'data,' in which people told stories and spoke openly with each other and with me. In such instances, I paid close attention to the narrators' differences in class, age, gender, and ethnicity, as well as to the gaps and embellishments in their narratives. Often these were the more revealing details about the relations that underlie social practices.

II.
DJUNTA MON: MUTUAL HELP IN CAPE VERDE

Any description of the mutual-help practices (known interchangeably as *djuda mutua* or simply *djuda*) of Cape Verdean immigrants in Lisbon must include a discussion of similar practices in Cape Verde. After all, these are the phenomena that 'travel' with a population as it begins a 'new' life in its destination country. The most evident of these mutual-help practices found in Cape Verde is *djunta mon* (literally, 'the joining of hands,' but implying 'to work together' or 'a joint effort'). Conceptually, *djunta mon* and *djuda* (mutual help) are different, though in practice they merge into one another and may be intermixed (Gudeman, 1976: 34).

A defining characteristic of everyday life in rural Santiago, the island from which hails a majority of the Cape Verdean migrant population in Lisbon, *djunta mon* serves as a loosely organized mechanism to distribute labor during peak periods of the growing season. Though groups are organized before the first rain, there is considerable continuity in their composition from year to year. During seasons of sufficient rain, *djunta mon* enables the reproduction of Cape Verdean agriculture, based on maize and pulses. The practice allows for flexibility and autonomy in the allocation of workers according to the needs of the farmer, cuts the amount of time spent on fundamental tasks, reduces the uncertainty around activities essential to rural subsistence, and reinforces relations between family and group members (Farelo and González, 2008: 78).

During the planting (*simentera***)**, weeding (*monda*), harvesting (*kodjeta*), and storing of crops, neighbors and family members work in the fields of every land-owning participant until all work is done (Couto, 2010: 25). Those who receive *djunta mon* are expected to return the favor. As a result, farmers are able to reduce the time spent on these tasks by concentrating, coordinating, and synchronizing the labor organized by *djunta mon.* While it is mandatory that the host participate in *djunta mon,* she is also keen to observe the quality of the work being done. Often the people helping are inexperienced, not familiar with the locale, or do substandard work, which necessitates that the host serve as a teacher, manager, critic, and motivator. Though the practice takes place outside the marketplace, it is every bit as 'formal' and 'regulated' a system as an

equivalent market for wage labor (Narotzky, 1997: 38). The non-market social relations of *djunta mon,* based on kinship, friendship, or proximity, as well as on qualities such as trust (*konfiansa*), affection, or friendliness (*amizadi*), are a crucial part of production in rural Santiago.

Important events in the growing season initiate this cycle of labor circulation. Similar to the first rains (*azagu*) bringing life to the fields, the various types of *djunta mon* (i.e., the practice for weeding is different than the one for harvesting) sustain rural society in an environment inhospitable to agriculture (i.e., little rain, poor soil, mountainous topography, etc.). *Djunta mon* accomplishes this feat by means of its 'horizontal' structure, though rigid, 'vertical,' and hierarchical age- and gender-based divisions of labor characterize the practice (e.g., *koba txon*, when men dig the hole and women sow the seeds). Rural Cape Verdeans plan *djunta mon* in a way that enables them to fulfill the labor needs of *every* participant.

Due to 'pride' (*orgudju*) and other factors, these households do not specifically 'ask' others for help; in a mutually understood way, everyone knows and anticipates as to which households require assistance at a particular time (Pina-Cabral, 1986: 158). That Cape Verdean farmers are aware of their collaborators' progress allows them to employ a system of triage that allocates scarce human and material resources to the most deserving cases. If during this process a particular member's fields are overlooked, the group will attempt to correct this 'slight' at a later opportunity (Scheper-Hughes, 1992: 100).

Financial and material constraints limit this solidarity to a pragmatic system of labor circulation. People help each other primarily if they can expect something in return. To assemble *djunta mon,* a person needs to establish social capital and partnerships with the people in her midst and promise to return the favor at a later date. Before the times of peak labor demand, landowners and sharecroppers appeal to acquaintances and distant kin during festivals that mark the beginning of the farming year, such as Nhô San Djon, Kanizadi, and Tabanka (Trajano Filho, 2009: 537). Here, social interactions taking place during 'leisure' time translate into labor and production (Narotzky, 1997: 39).

Due to the limited number of workers willing to labor for marginal returns, landowners use these festivals, which are often island-wide events, as a time to recruit people from distant villages to help them work in their fields. For those who help,

'payment,' expected to be redeemed at some point, can take many forms: altruistic recognition, a loan of money or equipment, a service rendered, or a favor extended (Trefon, 2008: 24). Typically, the landowner or tenant receiving *djunta mon* will offer those who have come to work breakfast (*kafé*), a large lunch, a snack (*lantxi*), and a day's ration of juice for women and alcohol for men, in particular *grogu,* a spirit distilled from sugarcane (Couto, 2010: 261). At midday in the field, when the host shares a hearty meal with her companions, *djunta mon* usually acquires a festive air as a 'work-party.' The ability to offer food and alcohol, which requires pre-harvest financial resources, is fundamental in order to access the wageless labor of *djunta mon.*

Due to the manual nature of most Cape Verdean agriculture, the recruitment of additional labor from outside the household is necessary. During peak periods, households are not 'units of production,' since they do not possess the equipment, animals, and labor sufficient to achieve production targets. With *djunta mon,* people can increase the efficacy of their labor by working together in overlapping teams that circulate personnel and capital throughout the year (O'Neill, 1987: 121-122). The production unit, therefore, becomes a series of collaborating households connected by multiple and 'entangled' instances of *djunta mon* (Narotzky, 1997: 140). In this market, the main 'currency' is not cash but labor. Limited technology necessitates that *djunta mon* be organized quickly, as not to delay the work schedules of the participants during the busy periods of the agricultural year. In this regard, extending the task over a number of days with smaller teams is not an option. Each household relies in part on five or six other households, with whom ties of *djunta mon* are maintained. As a result, a farmer must be cognizant not only of her crops and production goals but also those of her *djunta mon* cohorts.

The mutual help of *djunta mon* is not the product of abstract ideas of rural equality. Disparities between better-off and more impoverished households are *not* temporarily suspended in the interest of completing a large task. Depending on size, one family's fields (*lugar*) may require that it summons another family for two full days to complete a task, while the latter group may use the former's labor for a mere two hours. As such, the obligation to give back *djunta mon* is strictly the same in this example, even though both families toiled in each other's fields for vastly different amounts of time

(O'Neill, 1987: 143). As my engineering-student informant said, "everybody works until the end," no matter how labor-intensive the task or imbalanced the exchange. *Djunta mon* groups are thus required to return individual acts of the practice independent of how much time they spend on each. It is in work done for families with different-sized fields that inequalities in *djunta mon* labor are most prominent, despite the affirmed presence of 'equality.'

The economic insecurity that rural Cape Verdeans face makes *djunta mon* an indispensible tradition of mutual assistance and cooperation. Yet its role is not static. The practice is constantly changing as people face new circumstances and economic conditions. Solomon (1992: 150-151), Couto (2010: 212), and Fikes (2010: 65) note a decline in the importance of *djunta mon* due to the desertification of agricultural land in rural Cape Verde, the introduction of specialized drip-irrigation projects to grow cash crops, the monetization and mechanization of peasant daily life, and large-scale interventions of government and international aid (cf. Gudeman, 1976: 34). The explanation of Pina-Cabral (1986: 36) on the decreasing viability of small-scale agriculture in Northern Portugal in the 1980s holds true for the rural Cape Verde of today: "In economic terms, the land alone no longer ensures subsistence, offering merely a basis upon which families can operate their strategies of economic maximization within a world which is increasingly non-agricultural."

As elsewhere, the marketplace and state subsidies have displaced more personalized, 'informal,' non-market economic relations such as *djunta mon.* Couto (2010: 212) cites how the 'decapitalization' of rural families and the 'de-agrarianation' of Cape Verdean society due to climate change, erosion, youth migration, and resource scarcity make it increasingly difficult for the average landowner to provide the incentives necessary for *djunta mon*. While mentioning the practice's resilience, Couto laments that its demise reveals the inability of many families to meet even the minimum requirements for this system of production. This 'regression' of *djunta mon* highlights how obtaining food in rural Cape Verde is now a matter of purchasing imported foodstuffs. Concurrent with rural Cape Verdeans becoming more dependent on external markets for food is an increasing demand for a variety of products that cannot be produced locally (Pina-Cabral, 1986: 208).

The Mutual-Help Practices of Cape Verdeans on the Lisbon Periphery

Djunta mon is not simply a rural practice. A major initiative of the Cape Verdean Government's Institute of [Diasporan] Communities is entitled 'Djunta Mon pa Disenvolvimentu di Kabu Verdi' (Cooperate for Cape Verde's Development) (Marcelino, 2011: 108). Solomon (1992) describes the importance of *djunta mon* as a matter of survival among the women of Tira Txapeu, a peripheral neighborhood of Praia, the capital city of Cape Verde. She defines *djunta mon* as a "particular form of mutual assistance relationship," as well as "mutual assistance relationships in general" (Solomon, 1992: xvi). In her description, Cape Verdeans negotiating a marginal and largely urban existence have transformed *djunta mon* to meet new challenges. This 'urban' *djunta mon* differs from its rural counterpart in organization, time spent, and task chosen. It involves fewer people, mostly women; operates on a year-round basis; and primarily centers around domestic work. As such, *djunta mon* can take the form of people offering others food, shelter, or water; collaborating on tasks such as cooking and childcare; and sharing essential items such as refrigerators, stoves, and washboards.

Solomon (1992: 144) stresses how *djunta mon* creates ties through which people give and receive help, and that the practice and its corollary obligations act as a Durkheimian "social glue... that holds Cape Verdean society together." In Tira Txapeu's environment of little security, *djunta mon* affords participants material benefits that make life easier. In some cases, help received through *djunta mon* can significantly improve a person's life, allowing her to 'get ahead.' Solomon notes that women's perception of *djunta mon* is particularly striking, as they include the practice in nearly all conversation about daily activities, long-term goals, and desires for the future. To these women, *djunta mon* is a taken-for-granted part of their lives. It serves to strengthen ties of kin- or friendship, for trust (*konfiansa*) between both parties is crucial. As in rural areas, close or extended family can provide assistance, or it can come from neighbors, co-godparents (*kumpadri*), friends, government officials, bosses (*patron*), or employees. While Carter (2007: 40) stresses that 'blood' relations are usually the first to provide *djunta mon* support, 'family' in Cape Verde is a flexible concept that people construct depending on varying circumstances. In accordance with Sahlins (2011: 6), "this proof merely extends the sense of an organic connection from the sphere of the given to that of the constructed."

It is worth noting that a majority of Tira Txapeu residents are migrants from the interior of the island (Santiago), and many have practiced 'rural' *djunta mon* on farmland that they or their families own in Cape Verde. Others travel back to the countryside to help farming family members during the growing season. Incidentally, Solomon (1992: 151) observes that a number of Tira Txapeu residents stopped farming because their rural *djunta mon* ties had fallen apart and they could not pay for the wage labor needed to replace them. With some nostalgia, nearly all her informants bemoaned the fact that the practice was not as strong as it once was.

While *djunta mon* has seemingly declined in importance in rural Cape Verde, mutual-help practices regarding home building or repair, or *laja kaza* ('to add concrete to one's house'), have gained prominence, especially as immigrants living abroad remit money to build retirement homes in the islands. Like peasant farmers in the countryside, people constructing houses in rural or urban areas without money to pay professional builders mobilize friends and family to assist with labor-intensive tasks, such as finishing the walls or ceiling of a house, laying a floor, raising a roof, or completing an exterior paint job. In return, the hosts provide copious food and alcohol to the workers, who can then ask the hosts for help at their own house-raising (*laja kaza)* at a later date. In spite of more readily available wage labor in cities, this system of non-monetized work is prevalent in urban Cape Verde, especially for those whose access to cash and the 'market' is limited (Gudeman, 1976: 35). Strict age- and gender-based divisions of labor characterize *laja kaza* in a manner similar to *djunta mon*. Certain tasks associated with this practice are the exclusive responsibility of women, such as cooking, collecting sand[1], and fetching water for the men who make the concrete blocks (*bloku*). Unlike *djunta mon*, however, *laja kaza* is more 'comfortable' alongside wage labor, as the unremunerated *laja kaza* cohort organized by the house's owner (*donu*) frequently works alongside a paid mason.

[1] The practice of collecting sand for making concrete has robbed many of the islands' beaches of their sand, leading municipalities and tourism outfits to import sand from Mauritania.

III.
NHA GENTI: THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF MUTUAL HELP IN LISBON

The plasticity afforded to the concept provides the rationale for my scholarship: an investigation of how Cape Verdeans[2] in Lisbon adapt and reproduce their mutual-help practices. As such, *djunta mon* in rural Cape Verde should be seen as conceptual starting point, which Lisbon's Cape Verdean migrants have creatively reinterpreted in order to deal with the challenges of their urban milieu(x). In this process, there is a dimension of 'imagining the rural' because many Cape Verdeans in Lisbon have never participated in activities that would resemble mutual help as practiced in rural Cape Verde, while others have never even been to the country.

Immigrants from the islands have brought to the Lisbon periphery ways of seeing, knowing, and reacting to the world that resembles in part their former lives in the Cape Verdean countryside. These modes of being encompass transnational space, such that Cape Verdean mutual-help practices, along with other traditions, have 'traveled' to the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (Åkesson, 2008 b: 256). Among my informants, acts of mutual help are a "culture constant [that they] bring with them, and [that] continues to be replenished through visits through family and through other social contacts" (Chamberlain, 1999: 253).

Much more than simply an example of 'village' life in the 'city,' mutual-help practices are an example of how these worlds overlap and intermingle, thus making it difficult to differentiate urban practice from its rural counterpart. Notions of 'rural' mutual help, above all *djunta mon*, are widespread among islanders in Lisbon, as has been indentified by many an 'outsider' (e.g., Fikes, 2000: 152-153; Farelo and González, 2008: 77; Fikes, 2009: 125; Marcelino, 2011: 108). Many Cape Verdeans grew up or spent much of their lives in rural Cape Verde before coming to Portugal, and daily flights and the relative proximity of the two countries allows for habitual travel between Portugal and Cape Verde. To these Cape Verdeans, the mutual-help practices of the countryside become a 'transnational' approach to urban-specific problems, a blend of

[2] I am aware that a generalized and global 'Cape Verdean' identity is insufficient in unifying the diversity of life experiences among people who self-identify as being Cape Verdean.

'traditional' belief systems and behaviors with their own newly acquired forms of 'modernity.' As such, these practices serve as a tie of national identity between Cape Verde and the diaspora: a link "made and remade by Cape Verdeans themselves and reproduced at the level of social relations in both material and symbolic ways" (Rodrigues, 2002: 269; cf. Anderson, 2001: 674).

With the exception of 'shantytowns' (*bairros de lata*) such as Cova da Moura or Seis de Maio and certain 'projects' (*bairros sociais*) such as Alto do Lumiar and Miraflores, where the presence of islanders is relatively 'hegemonic,' Cape Verdeans are interspersed on the Lisbon periphery and intermingle with the general population. Many children of these initial labor migrants continue to live close to, or even with, their parents and other kin (Chamberlain, 1999: 257). They have established strong networks of sociability that transcend simple geographic proximity or the sharing of socio-economic conditions (Ascensão, 2008: 16). Although not under circumstances freely chosen by themselves (Marx and Engels, 1992: 30), Cape Verdean labor immigrants have in part been able to 'create' a particular social world on the Lisbon periphery (Batalha, 2004: 144). They set themselves apart to a certain extent due to their Creole language (Kriolu)[3], particular customs, and other marks of distinctiveness.

That this 'community' (cf. Batalha, 2004: 131-192) entails complex patterns of interpersonal circulation makes it difficult for 'outsiders' (i.e., people of non-Cape Verdean origin) to become part of these mutual-help networks. In fact, all of my informants could not recall one instance of offering help to a non-Cape Verdean, save for my mother-of-four informant who occasionally looks after (*toma konta*) her Angolan husband's goddaughter (*fidjadu femia*). These Cape Verdean migrants, who refer to themselves and others from the islands as *nha genti* (my people), function as surrogate protective safety nets that help them reproduce horizontally their (marginal) position on the Lisbon periphery. Within each group circulate goods, favors, and information on work opportunities, housing options, 'good deals,' news (*notisia*) from family, and general advice on life in Lisbon. When a person decides to employ *djunta mon* to

[3] Kriolu is in large part unintelligible to native speakers of Portuguese.

complete some large task, she recruits potential collaborators from the pool of network members (Lomnitz, 1978: 185).

Several families or sets of neighbors who trade goods and services among themselves make up these mutual-help networks, which should be seen as representing a series of ongoing social relations. As such, each Cape Verdean labor migrant in Lisbon is 'entangled' in a number of different mutual-help relationships, usually a combination of ties initially made in the islands with others formed on the Lisbon periphery (Epstein, 1969 a: 117). Among immigrants in Lisbon, the persistence of certain customs and values from Cape Verde, the abandonment or modification of others, and the emergence of specifically 'hybrid' forms are all factors that characterize 'urban' mutual help. Often, simply sharing the 'common ground' of being Cape Verdean immigrants is enough to consummate a mutual-help relationship, but here too other factors (such as island of origin, Kriolu dialect, political allegiances, etc.) can serve to define the nature of their cooperation (Boswell, 1969: 252).

The mobile nature of Cape Verdeans in Lisbon – trips to Cape Verde, moving to another part of the city, immigration to France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, etc. – necessitates that one initiate mutual-help relations with a number of people. In general, there are frequent changes in the composition of Cape Verdean sociality networks due to arrivals and departures from the country, educational opportunities or medical care sought elsewhere, marriage of offspring, births, conflict with in-laws, and internal disputes, as well as participants leaving the network for more advantageous prospects or congenial kin in another place (Lomnitz, 1978: 189; Boswell, 1969: 252-253).

For women, such dynamics mean that they need to find multiple persons who can care for their children, help with household chores, or provide support or loans in times of financial difficulty. Cape Verdean mothers actively work to create networks upon which they can rely depending on the needs of their children. In this case, mutual-help ties allow a woman to reduce her financial and emotional dependence on a wayward husband on whose support she cannot depend. It is vital that the network does not collapse due to the withdrawal of one particular member, for Cape Verdean family arrangements frequently expand or contract with the loss of a job, a death in the family, the beginning or end of a relationship or friendship, or the departure or arrival of kin or

friends. During these and other instances, the mutual-help network may be mobilized in order to deal with the crises a particular member is facing.

Children play a large role in creating these relationships, as women are able to form networks with the family members between whose houses the children move (Lobo, 2006: 64). The grandmother-grandchild relationship is particularly important in this context, as are relations with the child's godparents, especially between girls and their godmothers (*madrinha*). Being selected by the parents of a child to be a godparent (*padrinhu*) is a way of 'familiarizing' mutual help with non-'blood' relatives under an ideology of 'co-godparenthood' (*kumpadriu*). Godparent responsibilities include being a 'second' mother or father to the child, in addition to periodically buying them gifts as the children grow older. The offspring of two co-godparents are 'siblings' (*irmon* or if 'godsisters' *irma*), even if the godparent-godchild relation only exists between one of the co-godparents and one of their godchildren (*fidjadu*). As it is between two 'blood' siblings, it is taboo for two 'godsiblings' to date. Further complicating this dynamic is that the word for co-godparent (*kumpadri*) can also mean a 'good friend' or 'chum,' meaning that there is often ambiguity as to what is co-godparenthood and what is simply a friendship.

Confirmations (*krizma*) and baptisms provide opportunities for godparents to provide mutual help to their co-godparents and godchildren. My mother-of-two informant was a particularly active helper during the baptism of her *kumadri*'s son. Though this *kumadri* is the godmother of her daughter, my informant was not chosen to be the *madrinha* of the to-be baptized boy. Regardless, my informant was one of five people to help her *kumadri* make the post-baptism dinner. This event required much food, in line with the saying "one pan is not enough" (*un panela ka ta txiga*). The newly baptized boy's *madrinha* was responsible for making or buying a blue-frosted cake (pink for girls), in addition to purchasing the child clothes, a votive candle, and a special towel for the ceremony. Buying drinks and arranging a space for the party was the responsibility of the godfather, as well as giving his godson a gold chain (earrings or bracelet for goddaughters). My informant mentioned that her *kumadri* would probably return the favor by helping with the baptism of her daughter, though she did not expect an exact labor exchange in this regard.

Another instance in which a lot of mutual help takes place is at the time of funerals. Similar to baptisms, funeral assistance is a form of help in which collaborators need not balance exactly accrued 'debts' of labor and money (cf. Pina-Cabral, 1986: 225); according to my construction-worker informant, 'showing respect' (*respetu*) to deceased Cape Verdeans and their families means contributing to the funeral expenses, especially money and food for the meals during the public wailing (*txora*) and after the seventh-day mass (*misa seti*). Organizing the funeral are the close family and friends of the bereaved. Unprompted, these people arrive at the house and start working: they clean, cook, and arrange a photomontage of the departed. Though the bereaved family usually purchases most of the food for the meals, the mutual-help cohort of family and friends is not remunerated for their labor-time. My university-student informant says that Cape Verdeans routinely go into debt in order to provide copious food and drink for these meals, generosity of which the less scrupulous frequently take advantage. He added that for this latter reason few Cape Verdeans still go through the trouble of organizing and paying for 'traditional' funerals.

Examining mutual help sheds light on the tendency towards matrifocality within Cape Verdean society, which at first glance can seem overly patriarchal. For many Cape Verdean migrants in Lisbon, matrifocal households function as a support network for the extended family. While present fathers and male kin are usually treated with respect and obedience, women are the primary initiators of mutual help. These undertakings become especially important when family members or friends first arrive to Portugal from Cape Verde. 'Making one's life' (*fazi vida*) abroad is an imperative shared by most Cape Verdeans, which means that emigration becomes more of a collective than individual process (Trajano Filho, 2009: 522-526; Chamberlain, 1999: 251-256). After settling herself in Lisbon, my mother-of-two informant has been able to facilitate the emigration (e.g., securing a visa, offering emotional support, and providing a place to stay and work contacts) for her sister and cousin, an example of what Lobo (2008: 137) and Batalha (2008: 31) call a "chain migration."

Sets of related Cape Verdean migrant households in Lisbon become gossip clusters (*papiador* or *fofokeru*), in which members discuss and criticize each other's affairs. As a result, group members tend to know a good deal of each other's private lives

and actions, making it difficult for those involved to keep their resources and needs a secret. This social structure enables the group to bring informal 'sanctions' upon its members when necessary (Gregory, 2003: 936). My university-student informant said that friends and family are aware as to who has been working, if money has arrived, and when additional resources have become available (cf. Stack, 1974: 36). The function of gossip is to reaffirm the norms of behavior held in common by those who participate in the cluster, as well as to prevent the participation of outsiders in the group.

In urban Lisbon, like elsewhere in the diaspora, Cape Verdeans' relationships with their kin, friends, and neighbors are in a sense 'de-structured,' in that the patriarchal social units of Cape Verde are transformed into an alternate family structure more 'appropriate' for the Lisbon periphery (cf. Pina-Cabral, In Press). The family is looked at horizontally, and transnationally, rather than vertically. This kind of kinship deemphasizes demarcated lines in favor of establishing nodes of potential linkage in a great many directions. In this regard, clusters of friends and relatives in Cape Verde and abroad, the basis of which is the cooperation of close adult female 'kin,' carry out domestic functions for immigrants living in Lisbon. I place kin in quotation marks, for Cape Verdeans often give kin names to friends, neighbors, and distant relatives to whom they are particularly close. My mother-of-two informant matter-of-factly told me, "My family's not just my brothers and sisters."

For example, children are taught to address adult friends of the family as 'aunt' or 'uncle' (e.g., *tiu afektivu*), meaning that social relations with non-kin are often conducted in an idiom of kinship. Even moderately friendly young people become each other's 'cousins' (*primu*). In both of these examples, the definition of family is extended outwards such that distant relations become closer kin (Scheper-Hughes, 1992: 104). Sometimes when non-kin family 'members' are given a kin name, no one remembers how the tie began. Interestingly enough, while Cape Verdeans frequently make their close friends kin, they much less commonly extend family status to in-laws. Affines are not seen to be 'permanent' fixtures, for conjugal relations among many Cape Verdeans are shorter-term arrangements.

One of the major resources of a Cape Verdean labor migrant is her set of family and neighborly relations, and expanding the circle of mutual-help collaborators is

essential to maintaining one's horizontal mobility on the Lisbon periphery (Lomnitz, 1971: 95). Those who share these obligations become the active participants in an individual's network. One normally expands the network by recruiting from its different nodes, while a change of circumstances can cause a person to reactivate dormant links with past network members (Boswell, 1969: 254). As such, a person who helps a large number of individuals in her network creates 'commitments' among them that must be honored. This person subsequently stands a better chance of being 'repaid' than somebody who limits the extent of her group (Stack, 1974: 40).

It is important to emphasize that the circulation of mutual help usually takes place between people of the same socioeconomic class. As Gregory (2003: 935) notes, "horizontal exchange occurs among class equals, while vertical exchange occurs between class unequals." In contrast, mutual-help circulation between individuals belonging to disparate classes assumes a dimension indicative of disparities in authority and position. Labor migrants become suspicious of more bourgeois friends and family (*kopu di leti*, literally 'cup of milk') who come to rely on their mutual help. The former group believes that the latter does not really need the help and that they are unlikely to give back. The bourgeois who takes advantage of mutual help is thought of as being 'cheap' (*txipi*), having poor repute (*mal vistu*), or even worse as 'stingy' (*pikinhas*), 'greedy' (*kobisozu*), or a 'miser' (*mon di baka*, literally 'a cow's hand'). As these asymmetries increase between collaborators, the mutual help of the less powerful increasingly takes the form of demonstrations of gratitude. In this regard, 'unbalanced' movement of mutual help usually means that the less-powerful partner makes up this deficit by offering her loyalty, thus transforming a supposedly 'egalitarian' practice into a kind of client-patron subordination (Lomnitz, 1988: 48).

In many regards a more 'effective' form of solidarity that the numerous Cape Verdean associations in Lisbon (cf. Maffia, 2008: 48), the mutual-help network integrates material assistance, social support, and a sense of national and diasporan identity, accomplishing this feat by means of lateral relationships with kin and friends and through a discourse of collectivity. A common saying in this regard is "as you receive with the one hand, so should you give with the other" (*se bu dadu ku un mon, longa ku kel otru*). Motivated within an ideology of kinship, and involving the circulation of complimentary

services ('favors'), mutual help can be seen as a protective structure for the social and economic survival of its participants. Not only is mutual help a major resource to Cape Verdean migrants in Lisbon, it is also creates group solidarity and acts as a mechanism of intra-group stability. My informants achieve this state through a semiotics of proximity within their network: giving and receiving, mutual dependency, and the sharing of material values, knowledge, and emotions.

Often portrayed as 'unstable,' the networks between Cape Verdean 'kin' are adaptive, resourceful strategies that often withstand long periods of separation between their members. Shared responsibilities guarantee stability within the mutual-help group, for the 'success' of these networks depends of their ability to maintain obligations (Stack, 1974: 24). In situations frequently marked by marginality and precariousness, the needs of the participants are constant. As such, network membership acquires a degree of permanence through repeated work together (Lobo, 2008: 143). Striking among Cape Verdean immigrants in Lisbon is the range and durability of their kin ties in a city where social relationships are frequently transitory and where the status of the labor migrant is so fundamentally uncertain and insecure. The continuation of extensive mutual-help ties ensures the support of 'kin' should a Cape Verdean migrant need help now or in the future (Epstein, 1969 b: 99).

In my observations, the concept of 'household' may not be best suited to explain the family lives of Cape Verdean immigrants, for it is difficult to identify a household's structural beginning or end. Among non-elite Cape Verdeans, the family (*familha*) is often an entity that evolves over time, better described as a set of relations that are constantly being negotiated in a wider context. The composition of a household reveals little about the interaction of its members, even as cooperation between close adult females is common (Stack, 1974: 102). Instead, several, diffuse kin-based households make up the family network, and fluctuations in their composition do not necessarily alter pre-existing cooperative arrangements. When in Lisbon, my university-student informant eats supper with his mother in Belas, stays with his aunt in Encarnação, and frequently crosses the Tagus to spend time with his stepsiblings and father in Foros de Amora (Margem Sul). Unsurprisingly, my informant considers himself a member of these three 'households.' As such, he interacts with a far-reaching group of people to whom he is

linked in varying ways, though not with the same degree of intensity (Åkesson, 2008 b: 250). This 'movement' of kin renders pertinent a comment from my mother-of-two informant: "Sometimes I have a crowd (*txeu genti*); sometimes I am all alone."

The need for wide-ranging networks of kin and family is in part due to the difficulty young, unmarried, childbearing Cape Verdeans in Lisbon face in forming conjugal households. Since many Cape Verdean male labor migrants have little access to steady, well-remunerated employment, they are frequently unable to be 'breadwinners,' or even afford the significant expenses necessary to have a 'proper' wedding 'in the church' (*kazamentu di igredja*). Likewise, the inclination of adult Cape Verdeans to emigrate further complicates long-lasting transnational ties based on the relationship between a woman and a man. Though monogamous marriages remain the 'ideal,' partners are often able to separate from one another with relatively little upheaval and find new companions, even as the emotional and economic costs of separation can be high, particularly for women with children. While numerous unmarried Cape Verdean couples act towards each other as if they were a married couple, many migrants, especially men, do not view conjugal relations to be formal long-term commitments.

In such instances, it is maternal kin who usually take parental responsibility for the child(ren). As each 'household' increasingly relies on the wages earned by the female head, the power of women in the home increases (Pina-Cabral, 1986: 86). When a teenage Cape Verdean gives birth, her close adult female relatives assume at least partial responsibility for the young child. Any boyfriends (*namoradu*) of the mother can assume the 'fatherly' duties of discipline and financial support, as well as be subject to the child's affections, but parental rights to the child usually belong to the mother and her relatives (Stack, 1974: 51). Even if the mother 'takes up' (*ranja*) with another man, each of her children will retain a set of paternal kin. The depth of these paternal relationships depend on the frequency of the father's visits, the amount of financial support he can give to the child(ren), and his ability to fulfill the roles of fatherhood. As a result of these factors, each child that a mother has with a different father will grow up with a slightly different personal network.

For example, my university-student informant was raised in rural Cape Verde by his aunt, who is the wife of the half-brother of each of his birth parents, who themselves

have additional children with spouses they met in Lisbon. My informant's birth mother encourages him to maintain 'goal-oriented' ties with his father, in the event that her son can be receive some 'reward' (usually monetary in nature) during a visit to the father and his family. Two former boyfriends of my mother-of-two informant are the fathers of her two daughters. Her eldest daughter spends the summer with her father and his kin in Praia, the capital of Cape Verde. As is often common with the children of 'single' Cape Verdean mothers, my informant's daughter has constant and close contact with her father and paternal relatives, a relationship that has lasted over the years. In another example, my domestic-worker informant has two daughters, each with a different father. Because my informant has spent the past thirteen years in Lisbon, her mother raised one of her daughters, while her former employer and close family friend raised the other. Interesting in this case is that my informant's daughter and her former employer, who is also the foster mother (*mai di kriason*) of her daughter, have the same name, an example of name-sharing preceding and perhaps fostering ties of *kriason*.

The importance of mutual help to Cape Verdean labor migrants in Lisbon presupposes the parties sharing *konfiansa* (confidence), a special kind of psychosocial proximity that Lomnitz (1971: 102) translates as "familiarity, trust, and social closeness." Mutual help done in a spirit of *konfiansa* is received without hard or guilty feelings for 'inconveniencing' the giver. The sentiment between Cape Verdeans implies a collective desire and disposition towards maintaining mutual-help relationships. My informants impart this 'trust' to those with whom they are familiar and share compatible needs. Essential to this phenomenon is economic and physical *proximity* between the parties, which in turn determines the conditions of the circulation. Repeated 'successful' instances of mutual help create self-perpetuating feedback between the individual act of giving and the increase in *konfiansa*.

My informants repeatedly stressed that one must possess *konfiansa* towards a person with whom one enters into a mutual-help 'transaction.' The actual nature of this relationship depends on the social distance between the parties, for the rules regarding circulation vary according to the degree of trust. Close friends and family do not need to specify a time limit or manner in which the gift must be returned (Bloch, 1973: 79-82).

The giver can sense the inherent advantage in providing mutual help, for in doing so her standing will inevitably rise within the gift-giving network.

There are prescribed forms of mutual-help circulation for each social distance. Generally speaking, *konfiansa* is greater among people who are close relatives, though this 'trust' can be extended to include dozens of less-proximate kin, friends, colleagues, and distant relatives. Among sisters, for example, there may be differences in age, personality, and the resources controlled by each, but this mutual help will remain more symmetrical, longer lasting, occur on a more frequent basis, and involve more 'sensitive' responsibilities than equivalent arrangements with non-kin. Likewise, one may consult an intimate friend about a problem that she would not readily disclose to a casual acquaintance. In contrast, other favors are more easily asked of close friends than of relatives. Delegating to those outside the immediate kin network becomes particularly important during funerals, as the bereaved are not allowed to undertake certain tasks such as cooking (Boswell, 1969: 254). Regardless, Cape Verdeans take for granted bestowing favors with proximate kin or close friends, between whom there is little question regarding the etiquette or statue of limitations for such support (Lomnitz, 1971: 96).

Both actively and subconsciously, Cape Verdean immigrants immerse themselves in circles of kin and friends to 'recruit' a stable number of people into their mutual-help networks (Stack, 1974: 29). As a participant confers rights and responsibilities on others, her network expands depending on the people involved and the kind of help she needs. Those with whom an individual shares obligations become the actively linked participants in her personal network. These people, in turn, form clusters of individuals who can bring additional participants into the mutual-help network. As instances of mutual help are met with satisfaction, the intensity of involvement between kinsmen and friends increases. These networks of 'entangled' kin and friends differ from casual swapping, due to the frequency with which they are activated.

An important part of this process is when a network member 'tests' the ability of a co-participant to follow through with a demand. My informants often contrive these 'requests' to be difficult to fulfill. A university-student informant of mine wanted his unemployed father to purchase a bus ticket for him even though he 'doubted' the father would be able to. My informants are explicit when considering the possibility of network

members *not* following the guidelines as implied by mutual help: to fail in carrying out an obligation is to be 'ungrateful' (*ingratu*), a spiteful label that Cape Verdeans seek to avoid at all costs.

Akin to the classic interpretation of Mauss (2002) the tendency of Cape Verdean labor migrants to circulate goods and services within mutual-help networks obliges them to give, receive, and repay these 'gifts.' Notably, the donor often needs whatever is given as desperately as does the receiver. In this sense, a mutual-help gift is never entirely alienated from its giver and does not become the sole 'property' of its receiver. When a network participant offers help that a friend or family member wants or needs, she gives under a voluntary guise in the spirit of mutuality. However, the offering is in effect obligatory, and failure to do so results in the 'perpetrator' being labeled 'ungrateful' (Åkesson, 2011: 337).

When an individual moves out of a 'household,' her kin network and economic sustenance are so entwined with that of other group members that she may continue to feel a part of that particular residential grouping. Cape Verdean families, and the friends and neighbors they consider kin, have established mutual-help networks based on co-habitation, mutual co-presence (Sahlins, 2011: 12), flexible household boundaries, strong intergenerational bonds, and female domestic authority. That a Cape Verdean living under difficult circumstances can go live in the house of relatives or friends is source of security upon which they come to depend. As a result, kin loyalties help offset to a certain degree the precariousness of unemployment and life at the margins (Stack, 1974: 123).

I hesitate to label mutual help 'reciprocity' because such a notion presupposes that the practice takes place between two clearly defined and determined individual persons. Among my informants, the circulation of mutual help goes together with the formation of identities, such that a precise separation between the person and the practice seems difficult to establish. Lévy-Bruhl (1949: 251, cited in Pina-Cabral, In Press) echoes this sentiment: "it is impossible for the individual to separate in himself what is properly his and that with which he participates in order to exist." Because these two entities (people and mutual help) are co-constituted, the practice should reflect how Cape Verdean migrants' constructive participation in the lives of those around them helps to define the

nature of their intra-group relations. In other words, they feel a sense of collective responsibility to provide mutual help to those with whom they are 'close' (in all senses of the term).

Mutual help among Cape Verdean labor immigrants can be considered a manifestation of Sahlins' "mutuality of being" (2011: 2). By means of the practice, my informants participate intrinsically in each other's existence. To help kin is *living* itself, or as my construction-worker informant said, "Life without helping family is not life" (*vida sen djuda familha é ka vida*). That kinship is fashioned in part on mutual-help circulation means that my informants possess associations with kin that are of varying intensity. This construction of kinship is based on reciprocally bestowed acts of mutual help. As such, relations can be deconstructed when mutual help ceases to circulate. This aspect gives Cape Verdean kinship its flexible nature, one that is responsive to individuals and circumstance without being marked by rigid consanguinity.

In this regard, mutual help becomes an idea through which my informants conceive of themselves on an interdependent basis. Their disposition to aid others leads to a co-construction of identities, with mutual help being the common substance they share. The obligations resulting from the practice cause collaborators to 'belong' to one another in a participatory sense, such that the self can be 'distributed' or 'divided' among multiple people. Alternatively, in one person can be found a number of individuals (Pina-Cabral, In Press). As Sahlins (2011: 13) poses, "what is in question is the character of the relationships rather than the nature of the person."

As to *when* a Cape Verdean migrant receiving mutual help honors a commitment is indicative of the relationship between the parties. Immediately 'paying back' an initial instance of mutual help implies a distant relation, whereas a lapse between the gift and counter-gift points to a closer relationship. As the social distance between mutual-help collaborators increases, so does the necessity with which the favors must be repaid. With friends, but not with family, "one hand washes the other" (*un mon laba un otu*), says my domestic-worker informant. Though initial instances of less-proximate mutual help are generally given without any overt thought of a specific return, participants keep a rough 'tally' of obligations to be drawn upon if the need arises (Lomnitz, 1971: 94).

Tasks that require temporary labor cooperation, such as infrequent childcare, bulk or specialty purchases of food, sharing (*pista*) of clothes and shoes, giving of rides or 'hitches' (*bulea*), help in building or repairing houses (*laja kaza*), or circulating appliances or electronics, can be left to shorter-term relationships, such as those between affines. For example, a distant 'cousin' of my mother-of-two informant occasionally brings her extra vegetables and rabbit meat from a small field (*lugar*) he tends on the Margem Sul (the southern side of the Tagus River). Essential in these relationships is a feeling of friendship (*amizadi*) or mutual fondness (*simpatia*), though these requests do not carry the same weight as ones coming from close family members. While not explicitly stated, there is a strong ideal among my informants that relatives, in particular proximate ones, look out for and help each other (Åkesson, 2008 b: 251).

The existence of short- and long-term commitments implies that one's mutual-help network is made up of relations defined by varying degrees of co-presence (Bloch, 1973: 77). It is important to note that such categories are not 'fixed,' as the boundaries between the interests of the partners are seldom clearly established. The social distance between parties can be 'narrowed,' at which time the participants are given more leeway as to when they may honor specific instances of mutual help. Though this distance may determine the type of favor one requests, an acquaintance can be 'promoted' to the status of a close friend by offering particularly important help. Correspondingly, an intimate friend may be 'demoted' to an acquaintance by failing to carry out her mutual-help obligations (Lomnitz, 1971: 101).

Among my informants, many acts of mutual help that were to the 'disadvantage' of the helper occurred regularly. My mother-of-two informant allowed her sister (same father and mother) and cousin to stay in her flat for long periods of time after they arrived from Cape Verde and before they were able to arrange work and find their own housing. The obligation of mutual help created in this instance will probably not be honored for some time, if at all. In general, Cape Verdean migrants in Lisbon first seek out the cooperation of kin, after which they will proceed to the help provided by less-proximate relations. When my schoolteacher informant arrived in Portugal to receive medical treatment unavailable in Cape Verde, she rented a room in Lisbon near a residence in which lives her family's former live-in domestic worker. As my informant was moving to

a place in which she had no kin, she instead turned to a family friend whom she ostensibly considers her 'sister.'

Like in Cape Verde, Cape Verdean migrants frequently associate mutual help with 'family' (*familha*) and express the relationship in moral terms. "I help her because we are family," oft stated my mother-of-two informant. As such, the idea of kinship among islanders in Lisbon is largely one of mutual-help circulation, trumping even love as a criterion (cf. Åkesson, 2008 b: 258). Indeed, in some regard, mutual help is kinship itself. With the exception of *djunta mon* and *laja kaza*, mutual help lacks any specific recruitment 'mechanisms' or norms as such. Many of my informants do not consider mutual help to be anything 'unique' or 'interesting,' for they have been inculcated with values of obligation toward kin since childhood. As Wall (2008: 232) writes, "[mutual-help practices] reproduce work/life patterns from previous, rural or migratory, contexts or experiences and as such as they are recognised as 'normal' solutions."

The social relations between Cape Verdean migrants result in large part from the giving of mutual help (Narotzky, 1997: 44). My informants' offers of help in a spirit of mutuality have the power to create, transfer, and manifest a multiplicity of sentiments among different people, reproducing concurrently many of the social and moral forces that bring together a group of individuals. In Maussian parlance, mutual help is a "total social phenomenon" (Mauss, 2002: 3; Sahlins, 1972: 169), with the power to enmesh material items, relations, values, and contracts.

My informants often see mutual help as the result of voluntary, even spontaneous, action, though they seldom acknowledge that in engaging in the practice, givers (re)create ties that tacitly oblige receivers into returning the favor at a later date (Stack, 1974: 34; Narotzky, 1997: 43-44). Any mutual help that flowed between my informants did not become the total 'possession' of its receiver, for the giver could often lay claim to a subsequent instance of the practice. Similar to the descriptions of Mauss (2002: 4), mutual help should be seen in a context of circulating favors that engages the honor of the both giver and receiver. If the practice is not 'returned' with another, a receiver can expect social consequences, constraints, and sanctions: "To refuse to give, or to fail to invite, is like refusing to accept – the equivalent of a declaration of war; it is a refusal of friendship" (Mauss, 2002: 17; cf. Malinowski, 1920: 100).

The Mutual-Help Practices of Cape Verdeans on the Lisbon Periphery

Mutual help between Cape Verdean immigrants in Lisbon mostly takes the form of generalized reciprocity, in accordance with the scheme of Sahlins (1972: 206). Unlike relationships of balanced reciprocity, in which giving and returning takes place within a specific time frame, my informants offer help not expecting an immediate counter-'gift' in return. The movement of mutual help between close friends and family is "implicit, non-quantified, long-term, and often very long-term, indeed frequently never consummated" (Narotzky, 1997: 130). The giving of mutual help is likely to foster in the giver a degree of satisfaction, while serving to fortify the bond between participants.

According with the approach of Mauss (2002), mutual help carries the essence of the giver, whose identity is closely bound to it and entails a commitment on the part of the receiver to give back. He states, "[mutual help] given is not inert. It is alive and often personified" (2002: 66). Thus, the receiver makes a tacit agreement to return what 'belongs' to the giver vis-à-vis a generalized 'spirit' of mutuality. These norms of circulation delineate to the involved parties a general idea of what constitutes 'repayment.' Narotzky (1997: 44) summarizes this sentiment: "That the [gift] embodies in such a way its previous holder(s), it pulls back toward the giver and creates a return-gift field of force."

However, scholars such as Åkesson (2011: 341-345) cite caution in viewing Cape Verdean mutual-help practices through the lens of Mauss's interpretation of the gift. Specifically, they question whether or not the identity of the giver can be transferred by means of giving gifts of mutual help. In my observations, the mutual help my informants circulate among themselves is sometimes, but not necessarily, imbued with the identity of the giver. In certain instances, there is no explicit attachment between the giver and the receiver of mutual help. This is especially the case for everyday occurrences, such as sharing meals, providing short-term childcare, or offering kin or friends a place to spend the night. In this light, while my informants generally take mutual help to be an essential part of their everyday lives, they do not ascribe a special status to a majority of its iterations. While recipients usually acknowledge such generosity, many do not find the giver's identity imbued in every instance of mutual help. For example, my university-student informant mentioned how 'indebted' he is to his aunt, who let him stay in her house on weekends while he completed a university degree. However, he does not

associate his scholastic achievement with the generosity of his aunt, whose identity has not been symbolically attached to his university degree. This aspect means that mutual help among Cape Verdeans diverges from Mauss's classic definition of the gift.

Among my informants, the obvious 'value' of mutual help occurring between kinsmen is that their motives transcend short-term economic implications. It is the heightened degree of co-presence among proximate mutual-help relationships that gives them economic significance for the long term. There is a great deal of looking out for and thinking about other members of the network. Without asking or being told or obliged, my university-student informant cleans, washes dishes, cooks, and takes care (*toma konta*) of his younger cousin for his aunt, with whom he stays while in Lisbon (Couto, 2010: 24-25). Cape Verdeans call this kind of spontaneous, unsolicited kindness *morabeza*, a sentiment immortalized in the music of the late chanteuse Cesária Évora. *Morabeza* can even achieve a Geertzian 'deep play' dimension among Cape Verdean migrants who have few resources to help others but who do so regardless. In this light, a quotation from U.S. poet Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Cage Bird Sings* seems appropriate: "Whatever was given by Black people was most probably needed as desperately by the donor as by the receiver. A fact which made the giving or receiving a rich exchange" (2002: 48).

These durable mutual-help relations ensure that kin and friendship networks will be put to work in moments such as immigration, medical emergency, job loss, break-up or divorce, or a death in the family. Mutual help makes it possible for Cape Verdean migrants to better cope with social change, such as the volatile swings in labor demand that characterize the poorly remunerated service sectors of the Portuguese economy. Knowledge of their mutual-help safety net is never far from my informants' thinking, helping them to complete undertakings both mundane and momentous. The process of job-hunting usually consists of one reviewing mentally all of her personal contacts, a tendency that quickly becomes mental habit (cf. Lomnitz, 1971: 94).

Obvious among my informants is a coexistence of mutual-help relationships that take place under different terms. The aggregate of these networks enables them to carry out an array of tasks necessary for survival on the Lisbon periphery. Cape Verdean migrants are keen to maintain a large pool of less-proximate potential collaborators, often

more than are required in the short term. Relying solely on close relatives for mutual help would restrict the number of tasks one is able to accomplish. For example, my construction-worker informant receives free lodging in the house of his cousin in Amadora (a Lisbon suburb), but he consults less-proximate acquaintances such as friends and colleagues for leads on potential work (Boswell, 1969: 288). After all, neither his aunt nor other relatives in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area work in the civil construction sector.

To maintain these relations, my construction-worker informant must engage on a more formal basis with 'colleagues' (*kolega*). This 'networking' (*konvivio*) often takes him to two bars in the Municipality of Amadora, one in the Parish of Buraca and the other in the Parish of Damaia. Here, mutual help becomes a chain of contacts involving friends or kinsmen acting as go-betweens that usually result in my informant finding work. In the above example lie both termini of the mutual-help spectrum. On the one hand, my construction-worker informant pays no rent to stay in the house of his aunt. On the other is my informant's attempt to activate to his network of contacts for self-interested but no less important ends. The intervals in between these extremes entail gradations in the level of sociality.

Understanding the cultural rules governing mutual help is essential for gaining insight into Cape Verdean migrants' daily interactions with kin and friends. Compliance with the unwritten rules of mutual-help circulation acquires a ritual character that helps to alleviate the anxiety and alienation that labor migrants from the islands face in Portuguese society. Following these rules helps to ensure that both parties, particularly when the participants are distant relations, are spared mutual embarrassment if a request cannot be satisfied (Lomnitz, 1971: 96). In this light, the rules of sociability prevent mutual-help collaborators from making the requirement of 'reciprocity' explicit. Though mutual-help relations allow for a great deal of flexibility as to where, when, and how obligations are fulfilled (Boswell, 1969: 296), the group eventually will wind down their commitments to a particular member if she is never able to oblige. In this sense, network participants ask for mutual help sparingly, as they want to avoid being called upon to fulfill many obligations over a short period of time.

IV.
'OVERCOMING DIFFICULTY': THE ECONOMY OF MUTUAL-HELP CIRCULATION

Obligation to kin can often camouflage the economic relations of mutual-help circulation, as such practices usually provide participants material benefits that can make their lives easier (Narotzky, 1997: 89). This powerful obligation among Cape Verdean migrants to circulate 'favors' is a creative response to difficult economic circumstances. It offers a possible solution to help them to "overcome difficulty," as my university-student informant mentioned. The nature of the Portuguese economy, like those in other Western European and North American countries, requires labor immigrants from the islands to devise ways to cope with (and at times even overcome) chronic crisis, misfortune, and events totally out of their control. In this context, networks of kin and friends provide support and reinforcement in difficult times, devising strategies for survival in a climate of economic scarcity.

Stack (1974: 29) recalls a similar situation among African Americans in an unnamed U.S. city: "poverty creates a necessity for this exchange of goods and services. The needs of families living at bare subsistence are so large compared to their average daily income that it is impossible for families to support themselves independently for fixed expenses and daily needs." When Cape Verdeans in Lisbon offer help in a spirit of mutuality, a 'value' is placed on the good or service that is not determined by its price or market worth. Rather, the value of the mutual help provided is more aligned to its retaining power over the receiver, in particular when and the conditions under which the giver can expect a 'return' on the gift. In this regard, mutual help is not an economic commodity per se, but is instead, as Lévi-Strauss mentions (1969: 54), a "vehicle and instrument for realities of another order, such as power, influence, sympathy, status and emotion."

A central aspect of the mutual-help practices of Cape Verdeans in Lisbon is shared indebtedness. If a friend asks a favor of somebody that can be easily fulfilled, it is usually advantageous that the person oblige. In turn, the person providing the help can expect (vis-à-vis a spirit of mutuality) that the receiving party will give it back at a later

date. It would be simplistic, however, to assume that 'repayment' linearly follows an initial act of giving help. The distinction between the two is usually blurred, with both being part of a system of circulation that has taken place over many years (Pina-Cabral, 1986: 159). As such, mutual help can be seen as a kind of social contract that may only take place when both parties agree to follow the same guidelines. People are very mindful to offer help on a constant basis, since providing goodwill in the present dictates the future help that one will receive.

In general, mutual-help practices among Cape Verdean labor immigrants are less organized than their 'rural' equivalents, require fewer people and less time, and usually involve women and domestic tasks (Lobo, 2006: 22). As in urban Cape Verde, mutual help in Lisbon is 'fragmented' and necessitates less upfront capital. Rather than being required to provide helpers food and drink, one can simply 'repay' a favor with another. The practice frequently attains a 'consumerist' or in-kind dimension, as goods and food circulate and are traded. Women can thus 'consume' without having to purchase many items. Transmutability is a factor here and adds an additional degree of flexibility. Supplying a good (e.g., clothes, food, consumer products, building materials, etc.) can return a favor that was done in the form of a service (a ride, childcare, use of capital, etc.), and vice-versa.

Note how the 'status' of a good can vary in this system (Martin, 2012: 125). For example, sunglasses can begin the day as being sold in a market for cash, then bartered for another pair and later resold at a profit. The sunglasses can subsequently be given away as a gift, and finally consumed as a good, often by a number of individuals within the mutual-help group (Gregory, 2003: 928). Regardless, by means of their movement, these goods and services not only help to fulfill participants' daily needs in a context of scarce resources, but also serve to regenerate the social fabric of a kin group living and working in a city with an indifferent gaze[4] (Narotzky, 1997: 141). While Mauss (2002: 101) wrote about the role of the gift in 'primitive' societies, one finds that many aspects of gift circulation are strongly embedded within Cape Verdean communities amidst a backdrop of commodity exchange on the Lisbon periphery (cf. Martin, 2012: 133).

[4] In response to questions along the lines of "which is least inhospitable country in the diaspora with the least indifferent gaze?" my informants' near unanimous answer is the Netherlands.

In terms of economic activity, productive 'units' among Cape Verdean labor immigrants usually have matrifocal bases that are supported by collaborators whose presence among the mother-child(ren) core varies (e.g., cousins, aunts and uncles, fathers, partners, in-laws, et al.). These people adjacent to the mother and her child(ren) are necessary, for few mother-child 'households' possess the scope of resources necessary (e.g., house, wage, food, clothes, social capital, information, etc.) to ensure horizontal mobility on the Lisbon periphery. Many of the steps taken to accomplish this 'objective,' however, can be met without paying in cash for services rendered. After all, in mutual-help terms, labor-power is the principal commodity, which can cancel out debts without the use of money. Though most mother-child cores possess insufficient means of production, an 'astute' (*spertu*) mother will utilize (*aproveta*) her network to borrow and circulate goods, labor, friendship, among other resources in order to ensure subsistence for her and her child(ren). As such, the sum of coordination between female kin is greater than its parts. Many of the needier Cape Verdean immigrant families must pool their efforts and resources in this way to avoid abject poverty.

Few 'households' of Cape Verdean immigrants on the Lisbon periphery can sustain themselves independently or constitute a cell of 'self-sufficiency.' Despite the many minor undertakings that are carried out by the mother, older children, and one or two very close friends or relatives, vital tasks like childcare, house maintenance, job placement, and acquiring relatively large sums of money necessitate that the mutual-help network temporarily 'expand.' Among cash-strapped islanders, the main 'currency' in these instances is labor and *konfiansa*. Each mother-child(ren) core is to a greater or lesser degree dependent on her mutual-help network within which she circulates labor, goods, friendship, meals, and favors. Thus, mothers cannot solely worry about their immediate states of affairs, but also need to pay attention to the situations of their networks' members, for these mutual-help collaborators have a stake in providing assistance to one another. In sum, the basic mother-child(ren) unit does not function alone, but does so as part of network of cooperating female kin and adjacent participants linked through the movement of mutual-help responsibilities (O'Neill, 1987: 135).

Cape Verdean immigrants' propensity towards mutual help is to a certain extent imposed by the workings of the stratified, national socio-economic system. Working-poor

Cape Verdeans lack long-term economic security and are excluded to a certain extent from access to services provided by institutions of the Portuguese state (Horta, 2008: 138). This marginality does not mean a lack of a connection with the 'formal' system, which views working-poor immigrant populations as sources of inexpensive labor and political support. In response to these forces, mutual-help practices can be a seen as healthy, creative adaptations necessary to weather to the inequality inherent in the Portuguese economy.

Cape Verdean immigrants share with one another because of the urgency of their needs. The obligations that a mutual-help cohort has towards one other helps safeguard the social standing of its members. In this light, mutual help can be seen as linked networks of kin and friends coming together to support and reinforce one another, giving them a steady source of the human and material resources necessary for survival on the economically deprived Lisbon periphery. The regularity with which female kin circulate 'favors' (*favor*) and acts of domestic cooperation means that someone would 'fall behind' if a network member did not follow through on her responsibilities. These arrangements depend on the tasks the group expects of one another and are what makes sure that the participants remain actively engaged in the networks (Stack, 1974: 28). Mutual help continues so long as the participants are equally satisfied, as participants wishing to be 'repaid' are compelled to take a person's good reputation as 'collateral' in the meantime.

It is the scarcity of economic and social capital that creates the need among Cape Verdean migrants to provide mutual help. Mutual-help circulation tends to deal with 'commodities' that are not made accessible by formal systems: 'free' childcare, help at baptisms and funerals, home-building assistance, interest-free credit, and job-market placement. Lomnitz (1988: 55) writes, "the inability of the formal system to satisfy societal needs gives rise to informal solutions. If the formal system is able to produce and distribute the goods and services required by all members of society, informal solutions would be less needed and thus less pervasive."

Despite their best efforts to the contrary, immigrants from the islands cannot 'control' their destinies or acquire a surplus of scarce capital. The modest economic gains made in Portugal during the 2000s did not benefit those in entry-level jobs. Like elsewhere in contemporary Euro-America, the needs of working-poor families on the

Lisbon periphery are so substantial in light of their income that it is nearly impossible for them to pay off monthly bills and daily expenses. Save for the rare surplus of money, labor immigrants from the islands spend most of their available funds on rent, utilities, and food. Earning abysmally low wages in sectors such as civil construction and cleaning services, many Cape Verdean immigrants face numerous obstacles that make it difficult for them to find better-paying employment, increase their savings, and maintain a sense of self-worth.

Though mutual help is 'productive,' in that it helps to produce the commodity of labor power, the relations involved in its production differ greatly from wage labor. A Marxian interpretation would highlight the fact that capitalist production requires the domestic labor of mutual help in order to ensure its supply of labor power. Marxist-feminist approaches (cf. Gottlieb, 1992: 135) cite how traditionally women-centered 'reproductive' activities such as childcare, cooking, and food collection are necessary to continue capitalist production. Proponents of this line of thinking believe that domestic labor can be valued by considering the price paid in the market for the labor power that produces domestic services.

To examine the movement of mutual help from solely an economistic perspective, however, would be to overlook an important factor. Establishing an exchange value implies that mutual-help work is an impersonal, a fungible commodity that is exchangeable and indifferent as to who carries out the task (Narotzky, 1997: 148). Among my informants, the giving and receiving of mutual help is thickly woven into relationships governed more by trust (*konfiansa*) than by contracts or market relations. Participants are generally bound to mutual help by means of intimate, emotionally charged relationships.

As a result, because these practices are strongly embedded within network relations, tasks completed by mutual help cannot be valued by a price system establishing market equivalence. In other words, one cannot simply examine the value of my informants' mutual help, for it does not replace products and services existing in the market. For example, my mother-of-two informant could pay a caregiver to look after her daughter, but she instead relies on the mutual help of an older Cape Verdean neighbor to accomplish this task. This 'exchange' creates goodwill and trust between all parties and

enables her daughter and the older woman to spend time together, aspects that go beyond a simple market valuation (Narotzky, 1997: 151).

By helping her lifelong friend and 'sister' find housing and take meals, my domestic-worker informant is reasserting her obligations, while at the same time helping to overcome my schoolteacher informant's lack of capital. When Cape Verdean migrants provide and receive mutual help, the act is celebrated not simply for what has been accomplished, but indirectly for what was achieved, namely the reinforcement of a communal bond (Ortiz, 2003: 892-893). Feelings of 'altruism' and 'generosity' generated from mutual help serve to 'repay' those who provided the help (Sahlins, 1972: 194). They become *genti diretu*, or virtuous and morally valid persons. As follows, the 'cancelling' of these mutual-help 'debts' further obligates the initial giver and so on. Acts and counter-acts of mutual help function as a set of social credit relations, thus permanently linking group participants to one another. These 'transactions' are not isolated acts, but are part of a cycle consisting of successive acts of mutual-help circulation.

Since mutual help results in a Cape Verdean migrant rendering a service, can it be considered 'productive' effort or 'work'? Unlike in capital markets, mutual help cannot be understood solely in terms of supply and demand (Lomnitz, 1988: 46). Like other value-creating phenomena, expended mutual-help 'labor' is assigned an exchange value. Like commodities, labor has two distinct values: a value in use and a value in exchange. However, the significance of mutual help depends less on the task completed (use-value) and more on the social relations that exist between the giving and receiving parties (exchange-value). The 'utility' of mutual help, then, combines the task the action completes and its ability to achieve the subjective satisfaction of the receiver. As a result, mutual-help 'work' generates social capital for the provider and a tacit 'guarantee' that her labor-time will be returned, while the receiver obtains a 'free' service temporarily in exchange for agreeing to 'repay' the act at a later date.

As is to be expected, Cape Verdean labor migrants do not employ such economistic language when referring to mutual help. Kin and friends carrying out the practice are not considered to be 'workers,' and they do not keep track of the number of hours spent at each task. When taking the 'balances' of expenditures, mutual-help collaborators make rough estimates as to their contributions of labor-time. The practice

can often be overly favorable to one of the parties involved, which can receive two or three times her initial expenditure of labor depending on the transaction. The social relations inherent to mutual help cloud the 'labor' expended on the practice.

Group members offer help by 'exchanging' their surplus labor-time in return for the possibility that the receiver will subsequently 'repay' the giver with assistance of a similar exchange-value. Labor-time becomes a kind of capital, corresponding to the 'value' of a particular mutual-help service. Any 'surplus' of a successful instance of mutual help will be shared between the giver and the receiver: the goodwill and the promise of future exchange for the former and a 'free' service rendered to the latter. Accordingly, labor-time becomes both the input and the output.

In certain instances of mutual help among Cape Verdean immigrants, Mauss's 'gift' very much survives, adapted to the contemporary Lisbon periphery. My informants uniformly told me they gave mutual help to others voluntarily, though in reality it is given and received by means of collective responsibility. When one accepts a gift, this means that she also accepts a 'challenge' and is obliged to participate subsequently in the support network. Following Mauss, mutual help "contains all the threads of which the social fabric is composed, making it a *total* social phenomen[on]" (2002: 3). As such, it is a logically structured system of communication that is at once economic, moral, and nationalistic.

When mutual help serves to accomplish a pressing or particularly formidable task, it assumes the identity of the giver and engages her honor with that of the receiver. Most times, however, mutual help is not imbued with a specific person's essence; in contrast to Mauss's definition of the gift, these are 'inert' favors, free of any personified spirit. In either case, my informants who received both Maussian and non-Maussian mutual help became obliged to re-circulate these 'gifts' at a latter time. As a result, it is not the mutual help in itself that prompts the receiver's desire to give something back but the acknowledgement that the giver has been generous with her time, recourses, or money.

Among my informants, a clear examples of mutual help occurred between less-proximate collaborators, but the lenience with which close kin and friends tolerated unbalanced circulation was so great that limited data reveal no clear pattern. While securing access to basic resources such as quality schooling, childcare, employment, and

housing was a struggle, they knew that they could always count on the mutual help of close kin, while acquaintances would only assist if prior obligations were met (Bloch, 1973: 79).

As a result, Cape Verdeans seemed to strike a balance between the proximate and distant members of the network. This strategy ensures that one would possess assistance to carry out a range of tasks in the near future, while having a core set of collaborators to make sure that essentials would be met at a later date. Life as a poor worker on the Lisbon periphery is precarious and unpredictable, meaning that Cape Verdean labor migrants require different amounts of mutual help depending on their circumstances at a particular time. Network members, as well, can be uncertain assets. They age, pass away, move away, become ill, fight, and so on. Thus, Cape Verdeans are inclined to have too many mutual-help collaborators so that they will always have enough to call upon at any given moment.

Differing degrees of co-presence create an 'economy' for recruiting mutual-help collaborators. Because they require 'maintenance,' less-proximate relationships are 'expensive' in the short run, though they can easily not be 'kept up' when of no longer of use. This flexibility with respect to more distant relations enables Cape Verdeans on the Lisbon periphery to have a degree of choice as to potential collaborators according to their personal advantage. Short-term economy augments long-term security, thus the existence of parallel tracks of mutual-help relationships that differ in regards to the degree of 'co-presence' between the parties involved (Bloch, 1973: 84; Sahlins, 2011: 12). Cape Verdean migrants invest resources in broadening their network, though they will not make this expansion at the expense of jeopardizing membership in a mutual-help network of close kin and friends.

In addition to how Cape Verdeans offer and receive help in the spirit of mutuality, it is interesting to note that they are *unable* to do certain activities while carrying out the practice. As such, tensions arise as to what mutual help *prevents* them from doing. The most obvious of these is failing to engage in the practice due to working for a wage. 'Productive,' remunerated labor takes priority over non-remunerated mutual help, giving Cape Verdean immigrants less free time to practice the latter.

Women feel this tension acutely, which can lead to feelings of conflict and guilt across their domestic and working lives. Those with paid employment have essentially 'two jobs,' one productive and another reproductive, and are responsible for the logistical and emotional sides of providing for a family. That low-paid Cape Verdean labor immigrants utilize mutual-help networks to balance these commitments challenges notions of 'individual self-sufficiency' and the supposed 'desirability' of abstract, anonymous markets (Dyer *et alia*, 2011: 687). Ironically, many of my female informants are involved in providing services, such as domestic cleaning, babysitting, and elderly care, that make possible the work-life balances of their middle- and upper-middle-class employers (*patron*).

As with other systems of mutual-help flow, the practices of Cape Verdean immigrants entail structurally a hierarchical differentiation between helper and helped; often people are unable to complete a task because the mutual help they were expecting in the interim did not materialize. For a myriad of reasons, people are frequently not able to offer help or they simply refuse. Furthermore, because mutual help is a practice in which ties dictate the resources one can access, those without the 'right' ties are not afforded any benefits. This fact about mutual help makes for two kinds of stories: people who benefit or 'gain' from the practice, and people who do not or whose efforts are not returned.

The expectations for mutual help are often not met, particularly when women try to enlist the help of men, a dynamic that highlights the potentially fraught relationships that the term 'mutual help' can hide (Dyer *et alia*, 2011: 695). Solomon (1992: 164) documents women on the periphery of Praia, the capital of Cape Verde, describing failed, unsuccessful, or incomplete mutual-help attempts with bitterness and frustration. Men, in particular, are loath to lose a day's wages by participating in the practice, finding it less expensive to pay someone to do the work. The division of labor with men limiting themselves to profit-making activities and women focusing on mutual help can give men considerable bargaining power within the domestic circle. Under these limitations, households wanting to complete a large task are likely to utilize a mix of hired assistance and an unpaid mutual-help cohort of family and friends.

Though ostensibly 'egalitarian,' mutual-help practices reveal much about the underlying structures of social hierarchy and inequality among Cape Verdeans. It is important to note that the existence of mutual help does not necessarily mean that the *entire* social structure in rural Cape Verde or in Lisbon can be considered communal or 'egalitarian.' In a better position to observe 'desirable' norms of behavior, wealthier individuals are more likely to accumulate 'prestige' capital by providing mutual-help assistance that cannot easily be repaid, and subsequently demand that others follow these norms in relation to them. Households with less capital generally do not require as much mutual-help labor as wealthier ones, for the simple fact that the poor provide more surplus value that they employ.

Likewise, the poor have less money to invest in capital, which in turn makes them more dependent on their wealthier counterparts. For example, working-poor Cape Verdean immigrants cannot afford many high-capital items (e.g., car, computer, washing machine, etc.) and are therefore dependent on better-off family and friends in order to use these goods. In contrast, households with more capital are less likely to offer their labor to others. Due to these asymmetries, wealthier individuals do not usually trade their own time for labor received from mutual help, but 'pay' for it instead with goods. Mutual help, therefore, which is ceremoniously and ideologically symmetrical and which is based on a system of labor circulation outwardly conceived of in terms of symmetrical reciprocity, can hide a system of class disparity, stratification, and control (Pina-Cabral, 1986: 157-160; O'Neill, 1987: 143). It is unlikely that the social processes of differentiation, exploitation, and stratification, which are rife on the Lisbon periphery, would suddenly cease to exist simply because of the efforts of mutual-help participants to the contrary (Ortiz, 2003: 906).

V.
EXAMPLES OF MUTUAL HELP IN LISBON
a. A WELL-BUILT *KAZA*

As the exodus to Portugal became more intense in the fifteen years after the 1974 revolution, increasing numbers of Cape Verdean women and children began to join men in the former metropole. In order to live with one another, many of these reunited Cape Verdean families moved to the edge of the Lisbon periphery, where they constructed 'shanties' (*barracas*) alongside the shacks belonging to domestic migrants and Romani families (Ascensão, 2008: 6). Recalling the building of the 'shantytowns,' my musician informant said that the hasty construction of temporary wooden structures enabled the builder to 'claim' a particular space within which they could erect a cement house from *inside* the shack. The final step involved tearing down the wooden structure to reveal a brick-wall house standing in the same place.

The construction of 'shantytowns' (*bairros de lata*) was in large part a conscious decision, for it was there that Cape Verdeans families could live together at low cost, form durable solidarity networks, grow food in gardens, and attempt to reproduce the social world of rural Cape Verde. Batalha (2004: 140-141) writes, "[In the shantytowns, Cape Verdeans] did not need to speak or act as Portuguese. In fact, they were the majority in most of the shantytowns where they lived and acted the way majorities act, setting the pace… The problem of accommodating the women and other family members waiting in Cape Verde disappeared, since they could always add an annex to the shack they lived in or build a new one." These 'pioneers' also freed themselves from landlords who frequently charged Cape Verdeans extortionate rents for inadequate facilities (Castles and Kosack, 1972: 13). Though precariously built and regarded as 'illegal,' these 'shantytowns' offered labor migrants the chance to live in their own home, proximity to places of employment, and even a degree of social and economic mobility (Andall, 1999: 243), especially when compared to the equivalent living standards of a rural Cape Verde in the throes of a multiyear drought and famine.

As immigration to Portugal intensified during this period, secure jobs and housing became increasingly scarce for those arriving. The rudimentary homes in the high-density

'shantytowns' lacked access to clean water and sanitation, drainage, paved roads, walkways, street lighting, and waste removal until the mid-1990s (Horta, 2008: 139). The initial shacks were unsustainable constructions made from crude cement blocks, corrugated iron, scrap wood, flattened tin plates, and sheet plastic. Though under constant fear of eviction and demolition, these pioneers were not thrown out of their homes and their numbers quickly increased. They divided and subdivided remaining lots for family members, friends, and other migrants. Residents constructed the neighborhood in stages, with the result being a motley, labyrinthine collection of properties that vary in size and shape. As 'squatters,' residents lacked title deeds to land plots, while the houses they built were deemed 'illegal.'

In Lisbon, as in the islands, Cape Verdeans rely on mutual help of *laja kaza* when constructing or repairing houses, a good example of when the practice complements wage labor, rather than standing in opposition to it. Participants, who presumably earn a wage during 'normal' working hours, provide mutual-help assistance in their 'leisure' time on weekends and weekday evenings during the summer. Thus, labor migrants convert the 'free' time afforded to them as wage earners into opportunities to provide mutual help (Martin 2012:133). People constantly look to help neighbors during intense periods of building in order to ensure ties that they can use when building their own home. Ascensão (2008: 29) calls this event a "summoning of allies," during which the proprietor brings together the labor and knowledge of kin, food and alcohol, heavy equipment like a concrete mixer ('borrowed' from a construction site from Saturday afternoon until Sunday evening), and materials (cement, bricks, tin, etc.) in order to erect a house.

At a building party, helpers are considered to be kin or friends and not 'workers.' As such, a kinsman who has helped a relative or friend does not keep track of the number of hours she has spent at each task. In this regard, the field observer should not ask 'what *work* did the informant carry out during a particular day?' but rather 'what did she *do* on that day?' (cf. Ortiz, 2003: 898). Regarding the beginnings of neighborhoods like Cova da Moura, my informants mentioned how construction organized by *djunta mon* and *laja kaza* allowed for the rapid growth of these areas. Horta (2008: 302-303) quotes an informant: "we spent all of Saturday and Sunday in Cova da Moura. Everyone helped us.

The men and I worked on the house, and I cooked for them. I very much liked those days." Supervision of house construction projects, as vividly documented in the film *Casa da Maria Fruta* (cited in Horta, 2008: 307-341), is a common task that those who stay on the Lisbon periphery can carry out on behalf of family members who have immigrated to Northern Europe.

In line with Lévi-Strauss (1987: 151), for whom the house was a hybrid form fusing different social orders, the *kaza* is a practical and symbolic entity of special significance among Cape Verdean labor migrants (Ferreira, 2010: 80). To be the owner of a large house, 'well built' (*ben konstruidu*), is an indicator of prestige and 'success' in the neighborhood. Similar to the *casa de raiz* ('house made from scratch') on the Maputo (Mozambique) periphery, as examined by Nielsen (2011: 415), the *kaza ben konstruidu* "condenses whole realms of possible ideas… and allows complex relationships to be perceived and grasped in an instant." Ascensão (2008: 25) echoes this sentiment: "[the *kaza* becomes] part of an individual's and a community's life and not merely a shelter." More so than employment, one's house becomes the basis by which social mobility is measured. It is essential for success in the 'making a life' (*fazi vida*) projects of Cape Verdeans immigrants, as described by Horta (2008: 321-341). So common is this sentiment that Cape Verdeans from the 'shantytowns' frequently start building houses with only a vague idea as to when they will finish construction. One can see the result of these unfinished housing attempts in neighborhoods such as Cova da Moura and Seis de Maio (Municipality of Amadora), where partially constructed homes abound.

As this 'informal housing' has come to acquire an air of permanency, Cape Verdean labor migrants have faced two major developments. A number of Cape Verdean-majority 'shantytowns' on the Lisbon periphery, such as Pedreira dos Húngaros in the Municipality of Oeiras, were razed under orders from the municipal and national governments, obliging their inhabitants to resettle in one of new government-built 'projects' (*bairros sociais*). Often farther from the Lisbon center than the 'shantytowns,' these projects separated families and neighbors who had built solidarity networks in places like Pedreira dos Húngaros. The schools attached to these resettlement neighborhoods became known as 'schools for blacks,' infamous for their 'out-of-control' students. These new arrangements compounded the social, economic, and political

marginality Cape Verdean labor migrants encountered, as the 'projects' became stigmatized as "places of the poor and immigrants" (Gusmão, 2004: 147) or worse, ghettos (Horta, 2008: 144). Gusmão (2004: 148) concludes, "these neighborhoods are seen by the gaze of the average Portuguese and by the social authorities and the police as segregated spaces, marked by relations of violence and marginality."

The second scenario facing 'shantytown dwellers' during this period was the continued threat from national and local political leaders to evict the 'squatters' from their 'illegally constructed shanties.' My musician informant recalled municipal officials ordering homes demolished in 'problematic' neighborhoods (*bairros problemáticos*) if they 'believed' that the home had been 'abandoned.' He mentioned that if no one answered the door during their weekly visits, the authorities would post a demolition order on the dwelling. If the 'owners' did not respond to this warning within a certain period of time, the municipality would raze the home and charge a fee for storing the owner's belongings. My musician informant spoke to this aggression in no ambiguous terms: "it is crisis from all sides."

Indicative of the complex relations between the state and the residents of the 'shantytowns,' these developments created much unease among the populations of neighborhoods like Cova da Moura, who did not know if their self-built homes, along with their dense network of friendships and congeniality, would be spared the wrecking ball. To make matters worse, due to high demographic pressure and government indifference, access to resources and legitimacy in these areas became an unending negotiation process, characterized by 'turf wars' and hard bargaining. Individuals constantly disputed their rights (*diretu*) to the land, during which they would summon former owners, neighbors, and friends to corroborate their claims (Nielsen, 2011: 410-411). Denied municipal aid and guidance, residents created governance structures such as Residents' Associations (*Associações de Moradores*) that often juxtaposed state agencies (Trefon, 2008: 17; Horta, 2008: 140). When interaction with municipal authorities became necessary, the population was forced to pay bribes to city hall (*Câmara Municipal*) functionaries, thus creating a strong sense of resentment against local institutional power (Horta, 2008: 307).

Because good housing is such a scarce commodity on the Lisbon periphery, a common instance of mutual help is offering a network member a place to stay, either for a night or for years. My construction-worker informant pays no rent in order to live in the otherwise empty home of his cousin, who is currently working in France. My engineering- and university-student informants are allowed stay in the house of their aunt when they come to Lisbon for holidays and weekends. My mother-of-two informant allowed her sister (same father and mother) and cousin to stay in her flat for four and ten months respectively, after they arrived from Cape Verde but before they were able to arrange work and find their own housing.

In addition to hosting her nephews, niece, and sister, my mother-of-two informant also rents a room to her estranged ex-husband's cousin, who stays in her flat when in Lisbon en route to civil construction jobs in the Algarve (the southernmost region of Portugal), Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. While he comes and goes, his wife and newborn child live in the room on a full-time basis. Advantageously, my underemployed mother-of-two informant uses the money she collects from her ex-husband's cousin to pay the rent and expenses of the flat. This arrangement allows my informant to use her rented home as an economic asset during uncertain times, from which she can extract a kind of 'rent.' Similarly, in the 1980s in neighborhoods like Cova da Moura, single-family dwellings were rapidly transformed into 'hostels' and 'homes' (*lar*) and rented out to the growing number of incoming residents. As a result, the lodging and feeding of new migrants during their initial stay in Lisbon became an important entrepreneurial opportunity for a few enterprising Cape Verdeans (Oliveira, 2008: 82).

Complicating these housing situations is the fact that Cape Verdeans frequently use Lisbon as a 'first stop' in their migration trajectories. Bearing Portuguese citizenship gives a Cape Verdean migrant the ability to travel without restriction within European Union and Schengen Area territory. This 'stop' in Lisbon could be as short as an overnight or as long as up to tens of years, during which time these migrants receive up-to-date information from friends and family about potential destination countries. On many occasions, family members in other European countries or in the U.S. pay their air or bus fare from Lisbon, in addition to giving them the contacts necessary to obtain their first job (Farelo and González, 2008: 234).

b. TAKING CARE OF CHILDREN

In her study of Cape Verdeans in Rotterdam, Andall (1999: 252) demonstrates how mutual-help networks among immigrant women allow them to rotate childcare responsibilities. For many of these mothers, paid daycare occasionally supplements this network, which requires sharing and negotiation between the mothers, their spouses, and elder children with respect to pick-up in the early morning and drop off at night. As has been described in other contexts (e.g., Stack, 1974: 28), temporary child-exchange between immigrant women from the islands is a symbol of mutual trust, alliance, and bonds of obligation and points to the elasticity inherent in the Cape Verdean family (*familha*). Discussing the role of 'circulating' children in a working-class context in Porto Alegre (southern Brazil), Fonseca (2004: 168) notes, "[children], as objects of exchange which themselves carry memories, have been fundamental in countering the centripetal forces that tend to splinter family members off."

From the children's point of view, there may be a number of women whom they consider to be their 'mothers,' a kin term that can entail a cluster of social identities. Before heading off to work, my mother-of-two informant leaves her daughter with an older, widowed Cape Verdean woman who 'takes care' (*toma konta*) of the young girl, in addition to her own six children, two grandchildren, and a number of younger extended family members and children of other Cape Verdean immigrants in the neighborhood. My informant also mentioned that this woman, who has a bad back and cannot be formally employed would look after children whose parents are visiting Cape Verde. When asked why she takes care of so many children, my informant responded that she likes a 'moving household' or a 'busy house' (*kaza movimentadu*).

After telling me that she did not have to pay for this 'service,' save for odd 'donations' of food, my informant believed she was making a 'gift' to this older woman, providing her with the daytime company of a little girl (cf. Fonseca, 2004: 168). While it may seem that this older woman is taking care of the child for no apparent reason, she is indirectly 'building up' the loyalty of my informant's child, whom she can 'call upon' at a later date. Further 'entangling' these relations is that my informant's daughter is a close friend and peer of the older woman's youngest daughter. Is the time that these two spend

together 'daycare' or 'playtime'? Requiring a high level of *konfiansa*, this arrangement produces enduring links between the parties involved, for the upbringing of children is a long-term practice. From this perspective, childcare among Cape Verdean immigrants is a manifestation of the shared obligations of adults towards children and a catalyst for the allocation and circulation of limited resources available to the working poor on the Lisbon periphery.

Paradoxically, my mother-of-two informant needs someone to mind her daughter, so she can look after the two children of the woman for whom she works for five hours per day. Leaving children with trusted neighbors is one of the only strategies available to working-poor mothers: delegating care of their children to close female kin and friendly neighbors. Many of my informants with children have jobs close to home so that they can fulfill child rearing and domestic duties with providing for the family.

Additional strategies among Cape Verdean labor immigrants on the Lisbon periphery are to 'import' a caregiver, such as having a grandmother or great aunt visit Portugal on a 'tourist' visa in order to look after children, or to send the child(ren) to Cape Verde to spend the summer with either maternal or paternal kin. Not only are these low-cost options, often performed 'in kind,' but they are also considered to be 'good care.' Negotiations surrounding these informal delegations of childcare usually take place between extended female kin, but sometimes can also involve fathers, male kin, or older children in caring for younger siblings (Dyer *et alia*, 2011: 694).

Though only a minority of immigrant Cape Verdean families can be thought of as conjugal, a child's birth mother and father usually share responsibility for the child(ren). In times of need, however, these duties can be transferred to others. A number of my informants were brought up in homes that did not include their birth parents. In this light, it is misleading to regard the raising of children as being separate from residence patterns, the *konfiansa* (or lack thereof) between adult relatives, and the daily domestic network of the child. Fosterage, usually done by an 'upbringing mother' (*mai di kriason*), is especially common when the parents decide to emigrate. Such circumstances require that family members, often older female kin, raise and support the children of a birth mother who has immigrated (Stack, 1974: 29; Lobo, 2008: 135). The female relatives who help to bring up the child(ren) are recruited from the mutual-help networks of the child(ren)'s

mother, requiring their solidarity and organizational abilities in order to fulfill the needs of the child in the absence of the mother.

Cape Verdean mothers who have immigrated to Northern Europe frequently remain committed to supporting their children financially on the Lisbon periphery. In this regard, the moral expectations associated with motherhood among Cape Verdeans do not cease when a woman emigrates. Thus, these instances of immigration serve to strengthen relations between female kin, while ensuring to the *pais di kriason* that the mothers will provide monetary aid and the children will help with household chores and daily errands (Lobo, 2008: 141; Narotzky, 1997: 142). While some Cape Verdean couples consolidate their conjugal relationship during or after the birth(s) of their child(ren), it is frequently the tie between a child and mother or her female relatives that creates continuity and stability in kin networks (Åkesson, 2008 b: 252). As such, the children of emigrated women who remain on the Lisbon periphery become symbols of the money transfers and commitments that keep transnational Cape Verdean families together.

While a Cape Verdean mother with child(ren) may share parental responsibilities with the father(s), these may be 'reassigned' to others in times of crisis. My informants who are mothers repeatedly stressed that everyone in the mutual-help network has the responsibility to help bring up the child(ren) of other members. There are circumstances, above all immigration of the mother and/or father, that require parents to 'live' in households apart from their child(ren). As is common in Cape Verde, the adolescent children of immigrants in Lisbon have a degree of flexibility to choose the family member(s) with whom they want to live (Stack, 1974: 65; Sahlins, 2011: 6). A number of my informants grew up with 'upbringing parents' (*pais di kriason*), typically with female kin as 'upbringing mothers,' indicative of the deep-rooted fosterage culture found among non-elite Cape Verdeans. In these relationships, children often develop strong links with the *pais di kriason* who raised (*toma konta*) them. These are not bonds based on 'biology,' 'parenthood,' or the transfer of bodily substance, but mutual co-presence during the child's upbringing (*kriason*).

For example, my university-student informant was raised by his uncle's wife in the Cape Verdean countryside because his parents were living on the Lisbon periphery at that time. Nearby, my engineering-student informant grew up in the house of his

grandmother, whom he considers his *mai di kriason*. Likewise, the mother of my schoolteacher informant has brought up in her home in Praia, the capital of Cape Verde, the daughter of my domestic-worker informant, because her mother has lived abroad now for thirteen years. Notably, my domestic-worker informant used to be the live-in domestic help in my schoolteacher informant's mother's house.

On a shorter-term basis, many of my informants have been, or were brought up by, temporary foster parents, during situations that required someone other than the birth mother and father to raise their children. The kin of immigrant parents undergoing difficulty may insist on 'taking' a child for a time in order to help out (Stack, 1974: 66). In such cases, children are often cared for by their grandparents or by other participants in their parents' domestic network, and they may be transferred between their mother's household(s) and those of other close female kin.

When a grandmother, aunt, or great-aunt 'takes a child' from her natural mother to raise, this acquired parenthood often lasts throughout the child's lifetime, thus bestowing to the *pais di kriason* 'rights' (*diretu*) to the child(ren). Continuing the 'cycle,' many women, who as young mothers placed their child(ren) with *pais di kriason*, end up taking in somebody else's child(ren) to raise (Fonseca, 2004: 171). Growing up with 'upbringing parents,' a child may possess multiple loyalties and have domestic responsibilities towards a number of 'households.'

My mother-of-four informant admitted that her son, my university-student informant, upon gaining meaningful employment, will be obliged to 'repay' his *mai di kriason*, her brother's wife (*kunhada*), before he 'repays' her, his birth mother, who immigrated first to the Netherlands and later to Portugal while her son was growing up in rural Cape Verde. My mother-of-four informant added that she feels a profound sense of debt to her sister-in-law, with whom one of her four sons was left 'in good hands.' Within this network of mutual-help collaborators, my university-student informant has at different times resided with three or more adults who do not live together but cooperate with respect to childcare and domestic activities. As elsewhere, these decisions were made based on factors such as the resources available to each adult, the size of their homes, and most importantly interpersonal relations between the birth parents and the *pais di kriason*.

c. *TRABADJINHU*: (A BIT OF) WORK

Beginning in the mid-1950s, due to widespread underdevelopment in the countryside, Portugal's rural poor emigrated en masse to countries in Northern Europe and North American that were experiencing high levels of economic growth. Concurrently, Portugal's two large coastal cities, Lisbon and Porto, also started developing rapidly, creating employment opportunities in civil construction, services, public works, manufacturing, and industry. As the salaries in these sectors rose, pressured by the demand, Cape Verdean workers became a less inexpensive alternative. Likewise, the entry of Cape Verdeans at the bottom of the labor market made possible the 'promotion' of Portuguese workers to skilled, supervisory, technical, or white-collar positions with higher status and better conditions (Gorz, 1970: 29; Weeks, 2011: 610). At the same time, the Portuguese government made some tentative efforts to provide infrastructure to the then-colony of Cape Verde, contracting large construction companies to build desalination and power plants, wells, roads, dams, runways, and ports in the historically neglected islands. Upon completion, many of the companies offered contracts to their Cape Verdean employees to work on their ongoing projects in the metropole.

Once settled, the Cape Verdean 'labor pioneers' of the late 1960s and early 1970s passed word to family and friends in the islands that more workers were needed. Batalha (2008: 31) and Lobo (2008: 137) call this phenomenon "chain migration," which caused the number of Cape Verdean labor migrants in Portugal to grow rapidly. A larger, more sustained migratory flux followed in the mid-1980s, when increasing numbers of women and children arrived to join their family members already living in Portugal. The fifteen-year period that followed saw sustained economic growth precipitated by a construction boom, infrastructure improvements, and some industrialization in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area.

The Cape Verdean government's implementation of IMF-directed structural adjustment policies (SAPs) in 1990s provided further impetus to the exodus from the islands, as the government eliminated subsidies for farmers and propelled them into commodity markets dominated by subsidized Euro-American agribusiness. On the demand side, immigrants of this period found a job market in the Lisbon Metropolitan

Area buoyed by EU-fuelled growth, which created employment opportunities for low-skill workers in the formal and informal service sectors of the economy (Batalha, 2004: 168). Seizing an opportunity, Cape Verdean workers became indispensable in a number of sectors of the Portuguese economy, no longer merely filling gaps but serving as a vital part of the labor force in key industries such as civil construction and public works.

Assuming a central position in the productive process, these largely low-skilled migrants came to form a reserve army of labor in a highly fragmented and compartmentalized informal sector (Castles and Kosack, 1972: 3). They populated a wide range of unskilled and low-paid causal and service jobs, the majority with little security or trade-union representation, in disparate sectors of the Portuguese economy: cleaning services, 'informal' trade, light industry, domestic work, and civil and infrastructure construction (Barbosa and Ramos, 2008: 174). Cape Verdean migrants became competitors in a market in which the labor supply was structurally larger than the incessantly fluctuating demand (Breman, 2009: 33). Hired and fired essentially at will, these workers suffered prolonged and unpredictable periods of joblessness; upon attaining work, they found that many conditions of their employment were non-negotiable, including being required to make contributions to the Portuguese national social security system while seeing their eligibility for benefits severely restricted.

In Lisbon, Fikes (2009; 2000) documents Cape Verdean *peixeiras* (fishmongers) engaging in mutual help and *djunta mon* in an urban, work-related context: *peixeiras* helping each other at Docapesca, Lisbon's seafood distribution facility until 2003, and while selling the fish outside the Cais do Sodré, a transportation hub. Fikes defines *djunta mon* as "solidarity through community practice" (2009: 125) and "people [working] together or [collaborating] to defeat an obstacle" (2000: 152-153). Unlike in rural Cape Verde, these working Cape Verdean immigrants do not consider mutual help in opposition to salaried work. Instead, it is frequently the means by which people *find* wage labor (Lobo, 2006: 63). As is common, male kin introduce recently arrived male migrants to a livelihood and insert them into a recruitment network for a particular sector. In some cases, new migrants are introduced to the trade as apprentices and are given a cut of their hosts' salary until they can earn money on their own (cf. Lomnitz 1978: 189; Farelo and González, 2008: 234).

The Mutual-Help Practices of Cape Verdeans on the Lisbon Periphery

On the Lisbon periphery, finding work in a cleaning or construction outfit usually necessitates the strategic activation and utilization of local mutual-help networks and loyalties. Landing a paying job largely depends on a familial, neighborly, or 'ethnic' connection. Two of my informants who work in *limpeza* (domestic-work and cleaning-services sector) described a kind of "rotational labor" (Andall, 2008: 86), where they worked for a family for a period of time and then were replaced by a female relative or a close friend who had just arrived from the islands (Lobo, 2008: 136). From her interviews with residents of Cova da Moura, Horta (2008: 221) stresses the importance of a person's contact network in being able to arrange for them short-term work (*trabadjinhu*) in a 'competitive' sector (i.e., one in which labor supply outweighs demand) like civil construction or cleaning services.

For example, while still in Cape Verde, my mother-of-two informant found a job in Lisbon as a live-in domestic worker through a paternal aunt (*tia*). Replacing the *tia*, who returned to Cape Verde to be with her children, my informant proceeded to work for this (white) Portuguese family for four years. In 2008, she had to leave this job due to a pregnancy and the arrival of her eleven-year-old daughter from rural Cape Verde, for the family wanted their domestic worker to live in the house. Reproducing this 'rotational labor' scheme, my informant arranged for a friend to replace her. More recently, she has begun working in the place of her cousin for an elderly women and her daughter. She begins her five-hour workday making breakfast for the mother and cleaning her flat, after which she cleans at the daughter's and picks her children up from school in an upper-middle-class neighborhood of Lisbon.

The last fifteen years has seen a rise in the importance of subcontracting outfits, particularly in the construction industry, which have become vital sources of employment for Cape Verdean labor immigrants. As a result, subcontractors are able to draw upon workers from vast network of interethnic contacts, thus providing to the parties involved some flexibility in an otherwise economically unfavorable social context. Due to the growing fragmentation and specialization of the service sector, subcontracting both enables Cape Verdeans to use the professional experience they have acquired in Portugal and elsewhere, while also reducing the labor costs for construction companies. As such, the subcontracting outfit has in part become a way for Cape Verdeans to bypass the job-

market difficulties they encounter: discrimination, un- and underemployment, 'competition' from other immigrants from Brazil and Eastern Europe, and concentration in a sector in crisis (Oliveira, 2008: 84; Batalha, 2008: 35).

Góis (2008:17) writes that Cape Verdean subcontractors prefer to employ their fellow nationals (*patrisiu*) due to similarities in culture and language (Kriolu), "reproducing and amplifying the very network into which they insert themselves." As Cape Verdean workers become known as specializing in a limited number of tasks, however, a social network of inclusion (*nos ku nos*) ends up being, in certain cases, a network of exclusion by impeding access to new economic and employment opportunities. As Cape Verdeans risk 'saturating' a particular subsector of the construction industry, a strategy designed to help them find work can lead to high levels of unemployment in a moment of crisis.

My construction-worker informant has a client-patron relationship along these lines with a co-islander, who is known for his skill in making cobblestone walkways (*kalsada*). On a number of occasions, he has arranged for my informant some desperately needed short-term work (*trabadjinhu*). Like other Cape Verdean 'subcontractors' in Lisbon, my informant's friend can mobilize manpower to complete a job at short notice, though neither the subcontractors nor the laborers in their network retain any permanent commitment to the contractor. As a businessman, my informant's friend represents an effective link between the 'formal' part of the Portuguese economy and the migrant work force, a mediating figure who transverses different labor spheres that overlap each other in multiple dimensions. As to whom this subcontractor selects is a matter of triage. My construction-worker informant noted that subcontractors frequently choose their labor teams based on who needs work the most. Thus, in a time of crisis, wage labor becomes a scarce resource that the subcontractor is tasked with allocating (Marcelino, 2011: 3)

When we saw this *kalsada* specialist in a train station on the Lisbon periphery, my informant proceeded to over-state his praise for the work abilities of this 'friend,' first to me and then to him. Upon closer consideration, this encounter appeared to be an example of a client-patron arrangement, in which there is the 'downward' flow of employment to my informant to compensate for his poorly remunerated labor-time and loyalty. During the interaction, my informant was careful not to be seen as 'taxing' his friend, feeling

envy (*inveja*) or jealousy (*siumis*) toward him, or as asking too much. As such, pride may have prevented my informant from making further requests for work until his friend decides to 'cash in' on his offer of help.

Along similar lines, the work histories of my informants are strewn with references to their 'good' and 'bad' bosses (*patron*). My domestic-worker informant recalled the qualities of a good boss: paying workers fairly and on time, treating them like 'human beings' (*ser umanu*), and fronting them money when necessary. She mentioned that the latter was particularly important when she was paying her daughter's tuition and expenses to study at a Brazilian university.

Reliance on a 'broker' figure, however, makes upward mobility difficult, as the migrant working poor become reliant on too few people to come through with what little they may get. The 'power' this subcontractor has over my informant, however, is ultimately tenuous, for it is based on his ability to provide jobs to the network. The economic situation of his position means that he will likely not rise much above the level of insecurity associated with his 'workers.' Regardless, given the scarcity of jobs on the Lisbon periphery, coupled with the danger of losing one's wage, it is not surprising to find that brokers and bosses are seen to be necessary resources to ensure one's livelihood (Lomnitz, 1971: 94). Whereas a Cape Verdean migrant depends so much upon having a paying job, unemployment must count as a major hazard in their daily lives on the Lisbon periphery (Boswell, 1969: 255). The possibility of unemployment is always present as a potential risk to the personal security and well-being of a labor migrant (Epstein, 1969 b: 90-91).

As the service economy in Portugal frequently requires the rapid recruitment of labor teams, so too can they be disbanded at short notice. Consisting mostly of unaffiliated manual labor, labor remunerated at below minimum wage, or labor for the enterprises of kin and friends, these short-term activities, mostly never 'formalized,' are created and dissolved according to whims of the market and do not guarantee more than the temporary material survival for the workers. There is additional downward pressure on the wages of many poorly remunerated service-sector employees due to the attempts of firms to increase production without making capital investments, thus seeking to contract labor at increasingly lower rates. Likewise, small kin- or friend-organized work

groups often pay lower wages than would have been the case if organizers or brokers had not hired their own relatives or close friends.

Employment networks, such as those organizing Cape Verdean labor immigrants for work in cleaning or civil construction, frequently have the perverse effect of serving to reinforce ethnic boundaries. Portuguese employers will often use these networks to procure employees of a particular nationality, which corresponds to a certain essentialized personality 'type.' As a result, job seekers come to attain commodified, racialized identities that are too easily promulgated by the workers themselves (Anderson, 2001: 667; Horta, 2008: 222-223).

For example, my mother-of-two informant mentioned that (white) Portuguese families or cleaning-service outfits in search of workers will ask Cape Verdean employees to recruit their fellow nationals. To these employers, according to her, Cape Verdeans make for more efficient workers than 'Guineans,' who are "too different," or 'Africans' (i.e., Angolans, Santomeans, Mozambicans), who "don't like to work." Similarly, my construction-worker friend tells me that 'Guineans' (Muslim West Africans primarily from Guinea-Bissau, but also from Senegal) and Angolans are mediocre as painters, but are as lousy construction assistants (*asistenti*) because they are 'lazy.' Brazilians are 'friendly' and frequently have some technical ability (e.g., plumber or mason), but are not as qualified or hard working (*mutu trabadjador*) as the 'Ukrainians' (Eastern Europeans from either Ukraine, Moldova, or Romania). Furthermore, my informant tells me that Cape Verdean immigrants in the Portuguese civil-construction sector usually have a good reputation (*ben vistu*) for working in a diligent manner to better the lives of their families. According to him, Cape Verdeans are known as being skilled carpenters and makers of the *kalsada* cobblestone walkways, but they can also be impulsive (*mal kriadu*) and 'hot blooded' (*sangi kenti*), especially those from the Island of Santiago (*badiu*).

As shown, Cape Verdean immigrants, especially those from the 'projects' (e.g., Alto do Lumiar and Miraflores) and 'shantytowns' (e.g., Cova da Moura and Seis de Maio) of the Lisbon periphery, are concentrated in the most precarious and poorly remunerated strata of the Portuguese labor market, with many working without contract in the informal sector. This position makes the population especially vulnerable to

downturns in the national economy and to structural changes reinforced by economic liberalization, developments that have resulted in an increasingly informal and fragmented service-sector labor market (Weeks, 2011: 609-611).

In a Marxian analysis applicable to the situation of Cape Verdean labor migrants in Lisbon, Denning (2010: 97) notes how "greater attraction of workers by capital is accompanied by their greater repulsion… the workers are sometimes repelled, sometimes attracted again in greater masses… [the] higher the productivity of labor, the greater is the pressure of the workers on the means of employment, the more precarious there becomes the condition of their existence, namely the sale of their own labor-power." As in other post-industrial societies, Portugal needs a large pool of unemployed workers ready to be absorbed into the work force in times of economic expansion. Following Marx, this 'reserve army of labor' increases inter-worker competition and forces downward the wages of those employed in the low-paying, unskilled positions within Portuguese economy.

Through their mutual-help networks, Cape Verdean labor migrants are able to strategically exploit employment opportunities in industries such as civil and infrastructure construction, domestic work, elderly care, and cleaning services. With the increase in emigration from the islands in the mid-1980s, due to the scarcity of labor in Portugal, the Cape Verdeans who already had jobs introduced friends and family to their workplaces, meaning that a Cape Verdean presence came to characterize particular sectors of the labor market. The characteristics of this 'informal' economy awaiting Cape Verdean workers included a predominance of non-economic relations such as loyalty, a large volume of ad-hoc acts of exchange, and a lack of a state presence regulating these activities. My informants who came to Portugal during this period were keen to emphasize how they helped newcomers find employment, a kind of mutual help that has continued to this day (Åkesson, 2008 a: 101).

Góis (2008: 17) takes a more critical look at the 'sectorization' of Cape Verdean labor migrants in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, writing that this phenomenon "can either be seen as an job-market advantage or inversely a curse." Although they come from diverse backgrounds (cf. Batalha, 2004) and belong to different migratory phases, Cape Verdean labor migrants have generally inserted themselves into the job market in a

similar manner and as a result possess very little labor mobility (Oliveira, 2008: 74-75). While Cape Verdeans work in a variety of professions in Portugal, they are disproportionally concentrated in two sectors according to their gender: men in civil or infrastructure construction and women in domestic work or cleaning services. As elsewhere, these sectors have traditionally incorporated new poorly qualified immigrants, such as the arrival of Brazilians and 'Ukrainians' in the early 2000s.

Insertion in the labor market has implications for the way an immigrant integrates herself into the destination country, and as such Cape Verdeans are in constant competition for the few jobs available and have experienced only a degree of upwards labor mobility. Complicating matters is the fact that many do not obtain permanent work contracts even after having worked for the required amount of time. While this liminal position is in part due to the glacially slow pace with which the Portuguese immigration authorities (SEF, *Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras*) process residency permits, Góis (2008: 17) also believes that mutual-help networks allow Cape Verdean migrants to find work that does not require their status to be officialized.

Oliveira (2008: 75) has commented on the reported low propensity of Cape Verdean labor immigrants toward entrepreneurial activity in Portugal. On the one hand, she believes that the difficulty Cape Verdeans face in acquiring a work contract, coupled with increasing long-term unemployment and informalization in service-sector work, can create an 'incentive' for entrepreneurial activity. On the other hand, she realizes that the trend towards subcontracting, in which workers (called 'service providers') issue 'receipts' to employers without receiving contracts, has in effect isolated workers and "[failed] to generate any real growth in [Cape Verdean] entrepreneurial initiative" (Oliveira, 2008: 77).

d. PLAYING *TOTOKAXA*

In rural Santiago, most women and children participate in at least one *totokaxa* (singular and plural noun), a rotating credit association that brings together kin and friends for the purposes of saving and lending. Cape Verdeans of similar socio-economic status operate *totokaxa* as a vital non-market economic resource that incorporates

financial assistance with more traditional kinds of mutual-help cooperation (Biggart, 2001: 142). By taking part in or 'playing' (*djuga*) a *totokaxa*, members agree to make regular contributions to a fund that is given to every contributor once during the course of each rotation (Chamberlain, 1999: 260). This arrangement allows cash-poor rural Cape Verdeans to have periodic access to relatively substantial amounts of capital that they can use for debt repayment, retail purchases, funeral or baptism expenses, tuition or school supplies, business expenditures, or 'income smoothing' (i.e., reinsurance money that absorbs large losses and reduces the amount needed to cover them). My informants strive to pay cash for every purchase, so as to avoid interest-charging loans and installment plans.

In an interview, my university-student informant described the *totokaxa* in which he participated as a boy as involving ten to twenty of his friends and family of similar sex and age. The organizer is known as the *kaxa*, who receives the contributions from the group and can claim the first installment of money. Chosen for her stability and trustworthiness, the *kaxa* does not 'account' for the money with documentation; since no interest is charged, figuring out who receives how much and when is sufficiently easy that members are able to do the calculations in their heads. He told me that subsequent rounds can occur on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis and involve cash amounts as little as one euro or as much as twenty euros.

Like *djunta mon*, *totokaxa* participation takes place among Cape Verdean labor immigrants in Lisbon, though the practice is not as widespread as it is in rural Cape Verde. My mother-of-four informant detailed her *totokaxa* in Lisbon as a group of twenty Cape Verdean women, each of whom contribute a monthly installment of ten euros. Thus, each woman in the *totokaxa* collects 200 euros once every twenty months. Members are usually 'model' individuals (*genti sertu*) who are employed in similar labor fields and earn a comparable salary, while the leader chosen is someone who has long-standing ties to the group and a steady income. Because *totokaxa* take place among kin and close friends, all participants are well aware of each other's economic dependability and moral standing. Privileging qualities that socially 'ground' potential participants (ownership of a *kaza ben konstruidu*, steady employment, large family) further reduces uncertainty. Heading or participating in ('playing') a *totokaxa* reflects favorably on the

individuals involved, which people can subsequently use as an 'example' of their trustworthiness. My informant mentioned that her *totokaxa* cohort mostly uses the money to invest in businesses (hair salons, cafés, restaurants, etc.).

Konfiansa, or mutual trust, is essential between *totokaxa* participants, for the group has no official recourse to prevent the default of one or more members. After all, every member in the *totokaxa* rotation except the last, who is simply getting back the contributions she has already made, has an opportunistic financial incentive to take the money and not continue to pay into the fund. Yet defaults are rare. Failure to make the payments can lead to ostracism or exclusion from the group, a real hardship in contexts where *totokaxa* play an important economic role. Members' tenuous financial position and lack of geographic mobility make the *totokaxa* the only realistic means with which to raise capital.

New, risky, or inexperienced members are placed at the end of the cycle, which means that they have to 'prove' their reliability by paying in to the *totokaxa* before they can receive their share. Timely repayment of debt is paramount to earning and maintaining respect in the wider group, and many Cape Verdean *totokaxa* participants would go so far as to borrow money rather than face the embarrassment of default. My schoolteacher informant's mother continues to make the payments towards her daughter's *totokaxa* while my informant is in Portugal. Rather than besmirch the family name, Cape Verdeans routinely assume an obligation for a relative's *totokaxa* even if the member cannot make the payments due to a lack of money or an absence. Likewise, the likelihood of family members taking responsibility for payment, in the case of default, increases the 'attractiveness' of a potential *totokaxa* member.

Furthermore, *totokaxa* takes place between people with strong communal ties based on kinship or common identification with a place of cohabitation or island of origin. *Totokaxa* members usually are employed in similar sectors of the economy, earn a comparable income, and occupy an analogous position within the occupational hierarchy. This overlapping of neighborly, gender, religious (i.e., Catholic or Evangelical Protestant), language, age, kin, ethnic, and reputational ties gives *totokaxa* groups the ability to exert peer pressure on members in order to sustain participation and reduce the risk of default.

A significantly different member, as such, would be harder to 'control' through the informal means available to *totokaxa* participants. That the group will have future relations with each other is important in ensuring that its members will be able to meet their obligations in any given round. My informants speak of this pressure as *disciplining* them to save, akin to the course of a treatment in a twelve-step program. They regard this voluntary self-imposed social 'coercion' as necessary in order to save money they would otherwise spend. As Biggart (2001: 134) writes in her article on rotating credit associations, "When actors perceive that social or economic advancement is defined and controlled by the group, subordination to group practice makes sense as independent action cannot lead to success." Such is no doubt the case for Cape Verdean labor migrants on the Lisbon periphery, where mutual-help obligations are collective and alternative sources of mobility are limited.

Totokaxa in Lisbon offers to Cape Verdean immigrants a means of integrating themselves into an urban community, as well as it becoming a financial tool for those reluctant to use formal banking services, such as checkbooks or savings accounts, for fear of high interest rates (Chamberlain, 1999: 260). This difficulty in obtaining credit is especially true for women, who generally possess fewer resources and are at a disadvantage due to patriarchal family relations. Whereas banks demand that borrowers possess collateral, *totokaxa* membership considers the reputation of its participants to be a kind of 'social collateral,' which Cape Verdeans view as a stronger obligation than indirect, market-mediated bank loans.

On the Lisbon periphery, where there is a good deal of overlap with other labor migrants from the islands, Cape Verdeans are keen to maintain their reputation as trustworthy and reliable. The money accrued from *totokaxa* contributions allows participants to reduce the uncertainty associated with economic precariousness, as well as strengthening the social bonds of solidarity weakened by the impersonal cultural milieu of the Lisbon periphery (Biggart, 2001: 141-143; Chamberlain, 1999: 261). As such, social ties become a means of capital accumulation, while the making of timely contributions allows a member to earn and maintain respect within the group.

VI.
COUNTERFORCES

A palpable subtext in the discourse of my informants is an awareness that the giving of mutual help is becoming an increasingly less-common activity. Years of economic expansion on the Lisbon periphery have given way to marked discrepancies in wealth and privilege. They are adamant that they are no longer able to rely on aid from others to help them 'get by.' Fewer people seem to be embedded in the webs of mutual-help circulation that can enable a person on the margins to subsist (Fikes, 2010: 65). Worse, they say, friends and family continue to express empathy for those in need, especially in the current time of crisis, but are hesitant to take action to help the less fortunate among them. More and more Cape Verdeans fear putting themselves in a situation in which they might be the only person who steps in to provide the proverbial mutual-help 'gift.' For example, my mother-of-two informant said that she had difficulty finding a *madrinha* (godmother) for her youngest daughter, a prospect regarded previously as unthinkable.

My informants believe that this situation is caused by less and less cooperation, that Cape Verdeans in Lisbon now 'only care about themselves' (cf. Åkesson, 2008 a: 104-105). "They are cold" (*a-es é friu*) or "they don't have time" (*a-es ka teni tempu*) are common appraisals. This is certainly the case with some of my informants' better-off family members and friends (*copu di leti*), who are not as likely to be active participants in mutual-help networks. The childless, gainfully employed sister of one of my informants seemed resistant to participating in the daily exchanges taking place between her relatives in Lisbon, as if such activity would create too many commitments and oblige her unduly. In this sense, gift relationships are subject to a process of 'self-selection,' with individuals only entering into ones from which they can expect a positive outcome. As a phenomenon in which ties dictate the resources one can access, those without advantageous mutual-help ties are not afforded the benefits. Even though the unemployed are in greater need of contacts that might lead to job opportunities, it seems as if my employed informants had a higher number and a more diverse range of work-related connections (Narotzky, 1997: 76).

Given these limitations, Cape Verdeans with financial difficulty in Lisbon clearly operate within two different aid systems: the folk system of mutual help and a system of social assistance funded by the state. My informants act within a dual ethic: one egalitarian and personal, the other hierarchical and bureaucratic. In theory at least, a combination of these two aid sources prevents Cape Verdean immigrants from descending into destitution, though the combined support is rarely enough to ensure the semblance of a self-respecting life. One of the more accessible forms of aid is childcare in a state-supported crèche, where parents pay a monthly fee adjusted to their income.

While 'formal' forms of social support, such as state and church assistance, reduce to a certain extent the exigency with which less-fortunate Cape Verdeans need the mutual-help gifts of others, I believe that this change in attitude is due to their encountering neoliberal notions of "self-accountability" (Fikes, 2010: 64). Sadly, there is a disconnect between Cape Verdeans perceiving that their mutual-help practices are in decline and simultaneously needing the material support that they provide, an "acute imbalance between the expectations generated by egalitarian values and the opportunities offered by a system in crisis" (Farelo and González, 2008: 242). As such, conflicts arise as Cape Verdeans continue to see themselves as egalitarian while at the same time are painfully aware that they do not achieve this ideal (Pina-Cabral, 1986: 186).

The predatory effects of the 'crisis' have had severe consequences on the daily lives of many of my informants, such as exhausted workers being recast as 'lazy' (*prigisozu*) or 'dependents' (Åkesson, 2008 a: 106) who are unable to 'adapt' to 'modern times' (*tempu modernu*). Fikes (2010: 65) laments that "[the] separation of familial economic exchanges from [these stereotyped portrayals of the unemployed as 'lazy'] has the effect of diverting attention from the complete restructuring of social relationships and the new routes and subjects through which [income] now derives and circulates." Under an indifferent gaze on the Lisbon periphery, Cape Verdean migrants often find fault with individuals in their midst or blame particular social groups (e.g., '*Tugas*,'[5] Chinese, Romani, 'Ukrainians,' et al.) for their impoverishment, as opposed to the capital trajectories that can make their labor 'redundant' at a moment's notice.

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[5] *Tuga* is a derogatory term used by Lusophone Africans to refer to white Portuguese. It is analogous to Spanish-speaking Central and South Americans calling white U.S. citizens *gringos*.

Furthermore, Cape Verdean labor immigrants realize that mutual help diverges from the bourgeois ideals of 'self-sufficiency,' 'merit,' and individual 'achievement' propagated by the media and hegemonic economic discourse. Sahlins (2005: 37) calls this moment "humiliation," when subaltern peoples finally acknowledge that their own cultural value systems are inferior to those of Western(ized) elites. Accordingly, my informants have to 'stretch' their values in order to cope with their lives as poor workers. They are likely to share the bourgeois worldviews of the Portuguese middle and upper-middle classes, but they must adapt these values and align them with their own marginal circumstances.

For example, my female informants uniformly value monogamy and marriage, though only one of them has a stable, long-term union recognized by the church (cf. Scheper-Hughes, 1992: 323). Similarly, in a working-poor U.S. context, Stack (1974: 27) mentions the "double consciousness" of African-American men, who continue to hold 'mainstream' values (e.g., a nuclear family provided for by the male 'breadwinner') even as they are structurally denied opportunities for educational success and meaningful employment. Thus, the worldviews of the Lisbon bourgeoisie and the city's immigrant working poor are not as mutually exclusive as generally assumed (cf. Crehan, 2002: 116). Resorting to bourgeois discourses should not be seen as an abandonment of the ideology of mutual help, but is instead an acknowledgement among Cape Verdean migrants that 'advancement' comes from adhering to bourgeois ideals.

This collective sense of crisis is in part due to a particular notion of time that is shared by my informants. The link between the remembered past and a changed present is complex and takes place at many levels. As shown, years of crisis have weakened Cape Verdean migrants' ability to offer help in a spirit of mutuality, such that they are unable to counteract the unavoidable perception of the present (*gosi*) as one of discord and aberration. In the current crisis, 'before' (*antis*) is idealized as a time in which Cape Verdeans had more 'control' over everyday life by being able to provide mutual help (Pina-Cabral, 1987: 730). That they can no longer achieve this state reflects the polarization between 'before' and the present crisis. The act of offering help has lost importance, lessening my informants' commitment to reinforcing social bonds through

the practice. As a result, ‘crisis’ has become a starting point towards a future that will be characterized by instability, irreversibility, and fragmentation.

VII.
CONCLUSION

Well past the millennium, media reports and elite commissions continued to portray residents of 'shantytowns' and 'projects' as a nuisance to mainstream sensitivities and a presence that has kept land prices low, reflecting a linear association between ethnicity, poverty, and space (Gusmão, 2004: 150; Weeks, 2011: 610). Developers and politicians routinely colluded in establishing the 'untouchability' of this population, while denying them the rights of citizenship (Fikes, 2009: 96). These accounts simultaneously portray black youth in poor neighborhoods as victims of exclusion *and* as being delirious with rage, out to terrorize white bourgeois Lisbon (Lima, 2007: 157-163). Horta (2008: 170) writes that these representations "generate a feeling of impotence and marginalization that shapes the identity of the individual and the nature of her social relations."

Not surprisingly, residents of the 'shantytowns' and 'projects' have tried to change the discourse surrounding their 'clandestine' and 'stigmatized' status to alternative narratives of citizenship and social justice, led in part by NGOs such as SOS Racism and Cova da Moura's *Moinho da Juventude* ('Youth Windmill'). These efforts have succeeded to a certain extent in casting a different light on the city's 'African' spaces. That these neighborhoods have been able to 'synthesize' in part the disparate traditions and current life interests of their inhabitants has created a dynamic multi-ethnic urban culture on the Lisbon periphery (Gusmão, 2004: 175). Here, as Barbosa and Ramos (2008: 185) describe, there are "[Cape Verdeans] in the street pounding maize, children and youth asking for the blessings of elders with the well-known expression 'Nha dam benson' or 'Nha rastam,' and even people making their *kankan*, which is the traditional tobacco of Cape Verde." Such 'tradition' is a projection and reproduction of an imagined and lived Cape Verdean community on the Lisbon periphery, a "transnational form of being Cape Verdean sustained by the networks of solidarity" (Barbosa and Ramos 2008: 187).

Albeit partly a 'success,' these initiatives alone are not able to overcome the structural marginalization facing Cape Verdean labor immigrants, such that endemic

economic problems already in existence are being aggravated by the current global financial crisis (Marcelino, 2011: 116). Moreover, local opposition to the widespread stigmatization has its limits, as Horta (2008: 194) notes, for it lacks a point of convergence. Rather, outlets for 'resistance' among Cape Verdean labor immigrants and their families are diffused among charismatic churches, anti-racist social solidarity organizations, NGOs, and youth gangs (Davis, 2004: 33-34; cf. Comaroff, 1985).

The current situation is one of crisis, uncertainty, and occasional glimmers of hope. While Portuguese society has begun to recognize the contributions of the 'Afro-Portuguese' population, above all in culture and sports, a large percentage of them, particularly Cape Verdeans (though not exclusively), continue to live in the most impoverished areas in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. In this liminal space, neither entirely 'African' nor 'Portuguese,' Cape Verdean immigrants and their Portuguese-born children display "a heightened degree of creativity and pragmatism as they forge a new, autonomous, and proud culture in the heart of Portugal. The question of identity here does not entail the attachment to or identification with a national space or culture, but on positionality within the city, which entails a hybrid and insular state of being localized in a shifting multicultural urban landscape" (Arenas, 2011: 19).

Concerned ethnographers must avoid simplistic binary explanations when writing about the effects of marginality and crisis, while continuing to pay attention to how their ethnographies are received by readers who have not spent time with the complex individuals whose lives they attempt to describe. On the one hand, too much descriptive authority can be given to social and economic marginalization, which can subsequently turn the dynamic individuality and agency of subjects into a sterile discourse on victimization. "We might be small, but we are not baby chicks" (*a-nos é pikinoti, ma nos é ka pinton*), Cape Verdeans are fond of saying. Equally as troubling is trying to turn the giving of mutual help into grand, collectively organized 'strategies' that enable oppressed persons to resist everyday forms of domination. Intellectually lacking, this line of thinking can inadvertently sentimentalize situations of scarcity, dependency, and suffering.

To this end, I have attempted to synthesize descriptions of the marginal circumstances found on the Lisbon periphery with those of the lively, but threatened

mutual-help practices of Cape Verdean immigrants. I hope that this description neither portrays my protagonists as mere pawns in a cruel world nor understates the extent to which the Lisbon periphery encumbers their strength, endurance, and will. I have tried to bring together these two extremes, an approach that pays heed to the structural vulnerability facing Cape Verdean workers on the Lisbon periphery, while acknowledging the resilience, generosity, and creativity of my individual informants and their family and friends. Cape Verdean immigrants' mutual-help cooperation is not act of subversion, but is one they do to guarantee their material survival, even though the practice runs counter to the bourgeois 'ethic' of self-propelled achievement. They give gifts of mutual help in part due to the lack of alternatives, for living 'mainstream,' middle-class lifestyles is not an option for most of my informants (Stack, 1974: 129). That these practices seem to be occurring with less frequency makes life for my informants that much harder.

Even in 'crisis,' the giving of mutual help remains an integral part of the experience of being a Cape Verdean labor migrant on the Lisbon periphery. The act speaks to a wider social community, draws from a similar cultural tradition, and communicates a message of hope (cf. Lobo, 2008: 143). In this light, gifts of mutual help seek to stabilize a world whose 'order' is both elusive and estranging. Though hardly able to reverse the structural challenges that Cape Verdeans encounter, the giving of mutual help continues, albeit in a tentative manner (Comaroff, 1985: 253-254). In short, the 'kindness' of mutual help should be seen as a foil to the cruelty of the crisis. It carries the unseeming contradiction of providing the human relations not found in an otherwise inhumane world (Gottlieb, 1992: 135). When allowed to happen, mutual help can assuage the exploitation of the workplace and society and allow 'invisible' Cape Verdean laborers be at once altruistic, cunning, and selfless. It is in these situations that I find the famed Cape Verdean resilience (*forsa*), which I enjoy in their company admiringly and affectionately, if always a bit concerned for the future.

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